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Ollie North's Blueprint—*Jefferson Morley*

PERUVIAN HOLIDAY • PEARL BELL ON JEAN RHYS • CLIFFORD GEERTZ: IS ANTHROPOLOGY RELEVANT?

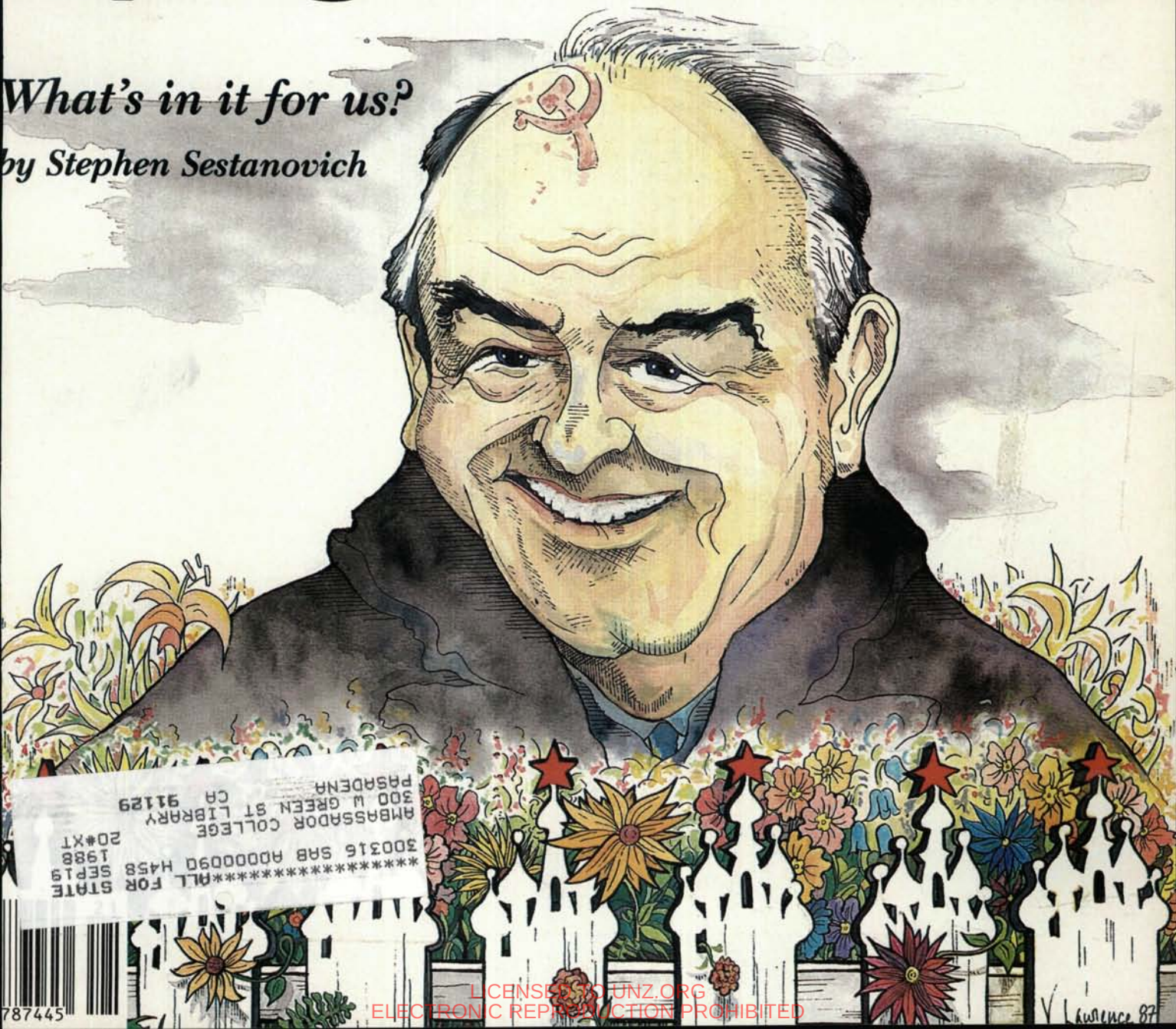
THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 15 1987

Springtime for Gorbo

What's in it for us?

by Stephen Sestanovich



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CORRESPONDENCE

BACKSTAGE AT THE MARCH

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke, to prove that the church and labor leaders who issued the call to the April 25 Mobilization were a "public front" for radicals, says the Program Committee for the April 25 Mobilization consisted of the director of CISPES and four others, of whom he names three, none representing the religious community ("Stealing a March," May 4). But the committee in fact consisted of eight persons, including Sister Maureen Fiedler, S.L., co-director of the Quixote Center, as its chair, and me, as a representative of a mainline Protestant denomination. Even a casual reading of the Appeal to the Mobilization issued by the religious and labor leaders would show that Lane Kirkland's charge that the Mobilization organizers were demanding a cutoff of U.S. aid to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala was wrong. But Kondracke simply says: "In a sense the AFL-CIO has overstated the left-wing radical character of the Mobilization."

We agree that a "network of church, labor, peace-and-justice, student, and women's groups has grown up that opposes U.S. policy in Central America" and that "hundreds of thousands of people have been persuaded that what the Reagan administration—and the AFL-CIO—deem to be democracy-building in fact is immoral interventionism." Kondracke sees this as a cause for despair; I see it as a sign of hope.

GEORGE CHAUNCEY
Director, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Washington, D.C.

Morton Kondracke replies:

Though the public was told the Mobilization was called by labor and the churches, the program committee consisted of only one mainline church representative (Mr. Chauncey) and one labor representative. The rest were left-wing political activists. Maureen Fiedler's group, though Roman Catholic-based, extols the virtues of the Sandinista regime, which persecutes the Church. I did not mention that Leslie Cagan, another committee member, is a veteran of the Venceremos Brigades in Cuba and spoke at a 1985 rally marking the tenth anniversary of the Communist victory in Vietnam; and Jack O'Dell, an aide to Jesse Jackson, was a member of the Communist Party U.S.A. into the 1950s and, according to *Commentary*, is still active in the Moscow-line World Peace Council. The Mobilization's public Appeal does not call for cutting off aid to El Salvador, but most of its organizers lobby Congress to that end, and some openly favor a Communist victory in Central America. The thousands who marched on April 25 weren't told about that hidden agenda.

OFF ON HOOK

To the editors:

In reply to Arthur Schlesinger's condescending review of my autobiography, *Out of Step* ("A Life at the Barricades," May 4), I attribute it to a defect of vision. Obviously a man who can look up to the Kennedys—all three of them!—can only look down on me. Contrary to his claim, my views on communism have changed across time, whereas his obsession with the Kennedys (which TNR editorially noted in 1980) only intensifies with time. Of course, I am not drawing an equation between the two.

Schlesinger also misstates the facts. Let me cite one example. I was referring to the late 1930s when I said that Eleanor Roosevelt was unable to distinguish between the rhetoric and reality of communism—this was during the heyday of Communist influence in the literary and cultural life of the nation, when even FDR was snared into becoming a member of the League of American Writers. Schlesinger quotes her denunciation of Communists as liars, but she did so in 1945—*after* the Nazi-Soviet pact, *after* the booing of FDR at the Communist-controlled Youth Congress, *after* FDR was labeled a fascist and warmonger. Only then, nearly a decade later, did Mrs. Roosevelt "sound like Sidney Hook." Surely a historian who attaches no significance to dates is an unreliable reviewer or guide to the past.

SIDNEY HOOK
Stanford, California

NO TEARS FOR TEXACO

To the editors:

TRB's column on the Pennzoil vs. Texaco case ("Et Tu, Pennzoil?" May 4) ignores

continued on page 41

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

On The Zipper Beat

The fuss over Gary Hart's alleged dirty weekend is giving everybody a chance to quote from Macaulay: "We know of no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodic fits of morality." Well, I know of one spectacle more ridiculous: the American press in one of its periodic fits of self-flagellation.

Far from being overly aggressive about invading people's privacy, American journalism is paralyzed by gentility in comparison to newspapers in Britain and elsewhere. Nobody forced Gary Hart to run for president, and nobody forced him to spend a weekend cavorting, carnally or otherwise, with another middle-aged married man and a couple of chicks half their age. This kind of behavior seems to be a congenital disease of politicians. The same juices that drive them to run for office drive many to horse around and may drive some to express themselves in other ways, like starting wars. This needs watching. They don't call it power lust for nothing.

Anything that keeps a politician humble and slightly unnerved is healthy for democracy. So is the regular reminder to the electorate of how ridiculous politicians can be. The pageant of human folly is valuable for its own sake, too. If politicians are going to run our lives, the least we can expect in return is to get some entertainment value out of them.

Journalists, though, are also somewhat full of ourselves. We need a more ennobling rationale for sitting all night in a car outside someone else's Capitol Hill town house. In Hart's case, there is the so-called "character issue." Many journalists also cling with relief to the fact that Hart, out of some weird self-destructive impulse, actually invited the press to try and catch him womanizing. "Follow me around, I don't care," he told the *New York Times*. "I'm serious. If anybody wants to put a tail on me, go ahead. They'd be very bored."

But Hart has invited such scrutiny in a larger sense, too, and so has almost every other politician in America. Hart says he wants to talk about the issues, his new ideas, and so on, not his personal life. But he has been talking about his personal life over and over again. He could have answered the inevitable questions about womanizing by saying, "The state of my marriage is nobody's business." Instead, he has painted a rather detailed picture of a marriage that went through some rocky times and emerged stronger than ever. He says he doesn't womanize. If that's not true, he's a liar, and lying is a legitimate issue by the hoitiest of toity standards.

No politician really keeps his private life private—only the parts of his private life he thinks the voters won't appreciate. If political candidates kept their wives and children and church volunteer activities out of the campaign, they'd be on firmer ground when insisting that their girlfriends or boyfriends or unsavory hobbies are irrelevant. What the press is protecting when it fails to report such things is not privacy. It's hypocrisy.

We are witnessing the breakdown, at long last, of an anti-democratic conspiracy among the Washington elite of journalists and politicians. The conspiracy was intended to keep information from the mass of voters that these benighted troglodytes couldn't be trusted with. The high-minded argument is that such matters are irrelevant to a person's fitness for office. The real motivation is fear that many citizens will disagree.

So what would have happened if the voters had known about FDR's liaison with Eleanor's social secretary, Lucy Mercer? I don't know what would have happened. It doesn't matter. Either you believe in democracy, in which case you trust in or at least tolerate the result, or you don't. Even in a democracy, of course, there are good reasons for keeping some information secret. But concern about its effect in the voting booth is not a good reason.

Journalists are understandably suffering from a bit of vertigo this week as

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STEPHEN S. COHEN AND JOHN ZYSMAN

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 25, 1987

WHAT CAN AMERICA SELL?

Representative Richard Gephardt, once dismissible as just another policy quack peddling trade-deficit snake oil, is now emerging as a genuine menace to the world economy. On April 29 he got a majority of the House to go along with his "fair trade" bill, which would require retaliatory trade restrictions against any country that builds a trade surplus with the United States by "unfairly" keeping our goods out. The measure probably won't survive the Senate, and would be vetoed by President Reagan anyway. But the vote did raise the protectionist temperature at a time when the administration, and the financial markets, were already sweating nervously. And suddenly the idea of Gephardt himself in the White House no longer seems so farfetched. Japan-bashing plays well in Iowa and other hard-pressed farm and industrial primary states—which is exactly why Gephardt is keeping it up.

Gephardtism is defeatism. For all the tough rhetoric about "retaliation," it boils down to whining about the fact that other countries are now beating us at our own economic game. Instead of meeting the challenge, Gephardt would have us shield sluggard industries behind tariff walls. The sensible alternative to Gephardtism is to make basic changes in American economic policy. Step one, letting the value of the dollar fall relative to the values of the Japanese yen and the West German mark, has already been taken. Step two is to reduce the U.S. budget deficit.

But long-term competitiveness means a national commitment to producing exports. This is not something Americans are accustomed to worrying about. Indeed, during most of our history our industries enjoyed a free ride. Until the 20th century, our own huge West was all the market American manufacturers needed. In the first two decades or so after World War II, it was easy for our manufacturing industries to compete, both in the U.S. market and abroad; other countries were still recovering from the war. But by the time Ronald Reagan came into office, most of this advantage had already been overtaken by the rebuilt nations of Western Europe and Japan. Then, instead of saving and investing for long-term prosperity, we opted for a short-term consumption spree. Thanks to a strong dollar, America became a superefficient import machine, and our export industries (even some relatively efficient producers) were crippled. The main things we offered in exchange for foreign goods—dollars and U.S. Treasury bills—are basically promises to fork over real American assets at some point in the future.

For all practical purposes, that moment has arrived. To pay off its foreign debt, the United States will have to begin selling things abroad faster than it buys them up. We are going to have to start learning to sell to the rest of the world. To adopt the language of classical free trade theory, we are going to have to find and exploit our comparative advantages, and develop new ones. Otherwise, we risk a recession now, and possibly a permanent decline in our standard of living later.

But what can America sell? Well, we can always sell America itself. In fact, we are already doing so. Japanese investors bought $3 billion worth of U.S. real estate in 1986, twice as much as in 1985. Direct investment in American industry by all foreigners grew from $109 billion to $209 billion in the last five years. There isn't necessarily anything wrong with this—so long as foreigners continue to reinvest their profits here, rather than take them back home. Americans can live just as well on paychecks signed by Dutch companies as they have on paychecks signed by American ones. The problem is that the larger the share of American production controlled by foreign interests, the more dependent we are on decisions their governments make. Trade-offs like that might make sense for developing countries that need foreign capital just to stay afloat. We're supposed to be a great power.

Far better to sell goods. But how can we do that if Japan won't let us? The answer is, tough as it may be to sell to Japan, it is getting easier. Thanks mostly to a weaker dollar (and a stronger yen), Japan's non-oil imports rose by 12.6 percent in dollar terms in 1986. Manufactured imports (not counting a one-time-only purchase of gold for a special commemorative Hirohito coin) went up 22 percent. Japan's average tariff rate is three percent, compared to 4.2 percent for the United States. (And the United States

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has been increasing non-tariff barriers much more rapidly than the Japanese. We've been especially hard on imports from developing countries.) If Prime Minister Nakasone is serious about stimulating domestic consumption in Japan—a shift in economic culture and policy every bit as historic as a new emphasis on exports would be for us—then the Japanese market will get even less forbidding.

But while American protectionists carp about how unfair the world is, others are rushing to take advantage of the signs of change in Japan. Common Market exports to Japan rose 57.3 percent last year. Our exports, by contrast, grew only 12.6 percent. And this despite the fact that the yen has appreciated almost eight times faster against our currency than against theirs. The Europeans are selling upmarket manufactured goods—even luxury cars—to the Japanese. Eleven of the top 20 American exports to Japan were commodities such as wheat, fish, and wood.

Let's face it: except for aircraft, most of our comparative advantage in world trade lies in the kinds of commodities and raw materials that backward countries generally sell to more advanced ones. All the more reason we should be pushing hard to negotiate new openings in the European and Japanese markets for farm goods—and opening up our own markets and eliminating subsidies for our farmers. If we're going to be a commodity-exporting country, then we should be for free trade in commodities.

But in the modern world economy, manufacturing is the name of the game. Countries make themselves and their citizens better-off by producing high-value-added goods. And it is in that area that we are falling behind. The U.S. trade balance in high-tech manufactured goods has been shrinking since 1980. The world has learned that equipment from Japan, West Germany, and Korea is simply more durable and better designed than stuff from America.

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	HAPPY TRAILS	5	23
2.	BACKDOOR MAN	*	10
3.	LOST EMPIRES	1	9
4.	AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL	—	1
5.	THE NEWS IN JEOPARDY	*	2
6.	BLOWUP	2	3
7.	THE ECONOMY OF AIDS	7	17
8.	THE FUTURE AS HISTORY	—	1
9.	ABREAST OF THE TIMES	—	1
10.	EAT TO THE BEAT	—	1

1. HAPPY TRAILS ▼

Iranamok. Hearings begin in the wake of Channell's guilty plea, publicly changing the scandal into a conspiracy. The shadow of conspiracy has already flitted across the White House, with Reagan claiming that his pricey audiences were—he thought—to thank people for TV ad money. In fact, Reagan himself remains outside the focus of these plot twists, and at this point it would take a smoking howitzer to re-inveigle him.

2. BACKDOOR MAN ▼

1988. The Hart-Rice brouhaha not only feeds into the reputation Hart has for being weird, it threatens to make him laughable. For a figure as dour as Hart, that's more important than his morals. Meanwhile, the issue of campaign brutality and its intimidating effect on candidates (ZC, March 16, May 11) is likely to remain a major coverage theme throughout the long season.

3. LOST EMPIRES ▼

Competitiveness. Never mind the Gephardt amendment. A new study from Columbia suggests a depressing parallel—rhetoric and all—with the decline of Britain as an industrial power. Edwardians reacted to trade deficits and slowed industrial output with the same loss of confidence and demand for shelter as U.S. politicians are doing now, and used the same arguments: equity, efficiency, reciprocity.

4. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ▼

Amnesty. The U.S.'s experiment in immigration amnesty has already caused widespread confusion. Employers have for some time been firing immigrants, illegal or not. Canada's afraid it will be overrun by immigrants fleeing the U.S., but the oddest side effect is El Salvador's concern about returning illegals. Money sent back by Salvadorans here illegally is the backbone of the Salvadoran economy.

5. THE NEWS IN JEOPARDY ▼

Network news. Why have the networks cooperated in hearings about the future of TV news? They would have been nuts not to. This is the most seriously they've been taken in years, and at a time of badly slipping ratings and competition from other media. Crusades, it's said, begin only when the problems they address are over with, and the suddenly heightened concern over network news is part of the same phenomenon.

6. BLOWUP ▼

The economy. Inflation is back, the CPI is rising, and gold seems a pretty good bet. Economists actually seem to agree that double-digits aren't likely to return, but in the context of falling confidence, the psychology of the marketplace can only take it as another kick.

7. THE ECONOMY OF AIDS ▼

AIDS. AIDS-related diseases are being redefined; there may be ten times more AIDS victims than believed until now. On the horizon is a major controversy: city services face severe strain, with nobody now knowing where the money to treat millions of AIDS victims is going to come from.

8. THE FUTURE AS HISTORY ▼

Superconductors. Television and newsweeklies both have given superconductors a great deal of attention. Much of the coverage is the familiar "wonderful world of the future" stuff. Unlike such coverage in the past, however, this advance is being presented in relatively new terms: this future may already belong to the Japanese.

9. ABREAST OF THE TIMES ▼

Advertising. The networks have chosen this moment to OK live-action women's lingerie commercials, angering conservative groups even before the first airing. Perfume ads have become so risqué that some *can't* run on network TV. With the rise of pornography (ZC, May 18) and the return of the miniskirt and décolleté (ZC, May 4), the AIDS Age appears to feature a wide-ranging strain of sublimation.

10. EAT TO THE BEAT ▼

Food. Americans are in such a hurry that even "old-fashioned" fast food is too troublesome. Needed are meals that can be cradled in one palm, preferably while driving or on the phone. Miniburgers are a good example. Coming: Chicken Littles and "Taking Breakfast by the Hand."

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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As the recent figures on Japanese imports suggest, foreigners often prefer relatively more expensive non-American products to ones that say "Made in the U.S.A."

The productivity of American manufacturing has grown by 23 percent over the last six years. That's fast, but it will have to grow even faster in the next decade. Because of our foreign debt, a large proportion of our future growth is already committed in advance to foreign countries. American productivity will have to increase faster than exports. Otherwise, all our growth increases will be going to foreigners, with nothing left over to raise Americans' own standards of living. We don't need our own mock-Japanese MITI to channel capital into government-selected industries. Consensus among bureaucrats is Japan's style. Free-wheeling competition among entrepreneurs is ours.

Still, in a global economy led by high-tech industry, the best way to achieve steady, rapid productivity growth is to enhance the capacity of our society as a whole to handle complex information and sophisticated production processes. And that does mean a greater role for government. We will have to increase the level of public money we spend on education, job training, and research into new products and manufacturing processes—the sorts of programs liberals have always been in favor of, and free market conservatives have always rejected, mindlessly, as budget-busters. But the payoff in higher growth from such investments would eventually mean a healthy balance sheet for the government itself. Today comparative advantage is a matter of collective will—a question of which societies are prepared to compete, and which are content to stagnate.

NOTEBOOK

□ YOU AND JAMES MADISON: As our bit for the bicentennial, TNR is inviting various law professors, politicians, and others to name a single amendment they would like to see tacked onto the Constitution. The results will be published in a few weeks. Yes, yes, we know, *American Heritage* has beaten us to this gimmick—but, what the heck, we're proceeding anyway. Readers are invited to join in. The most inspired contributions will be included in the symposium. Be concise.

□ PLATO'S RETREAT:

Ethics Compromise Is in the Works

—*New York Times*, April 30

□ WHO'S DUMPING NOW? The Soviet Union has agreed to take four million tons of surplus wheat off America's hands, and the Reagan administration has agreed to subsidize the sale. The Russians will pay the world price of $82.50 a ton, and American taxpayers will fork out $32.50 a ton so that wheat dealers will get the domestic price of $115 a ton. This is insane for all the obvious reasons. Why should America help to bail out the failed Soviet agriculture system? Why should American taxpayers subsidize American farmers? Why should the government be shoring up the price of food? But in the context of the present trade controversy, there is an added insanity. Subsidizing exports—dumping—is exactly what we accuse the Japanese of doing, exactly what has led us to impose "countervailing" duties on some Japanese goods. But even Japan has no explicit government program of paying the difference between the domestic price and the world price on one of its major exports. That's dumping with a vengeance. We note, though, that the Soviets don't seem to mind being dumped upon. They understand that there are worse things than getting a huge subsidy from your trading partner.

□ ATROCITIES AND ETIQUETTE: As the first publication in America to note Kurt Waldheim's Nazi past, we're delighted to see his name added to the list of visitors who are unwelcome in this country. But is the welcome mat now to be withdrawn for every head of state who is also implicated in mass murder? Over the decades, this might put a considerable damper on the White House social calendar. To prevent our humanitarian principles from hopelessly compromising our standards of superpower realpolitik, a line will have to be drawn—a sort of reverse statute of limitations. If, like Waldheim, someone committed or facilitated atrocities at an early stage of his career and then went on to become a head of state, he can be banned. On the other hand, atrocities committed or facilitated by heads of state in their current capacity should not stand in the way of said dignitary being admitted into the country, being greeted on the White House lawn, or—if necessary in the cause of diplomacy—being kissed on both cheeks by the president.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE FORD YEARS

RONALD REAGAN'S overarching task since Iranamok broke has been to create the aura of a third presidential term, a new beginning. He's succeeded. His first term coincided with, well, his first term. That was his buoyant Franklin D. Roosevelt phase, when he endured economic hard times, changed the direction of government and the mood of the nation, and was rewarded with a landslide re-election. Reagan's second term was his dark Richard Nixon phase, the 1985 to 1986 span in which arms were shipped to Iran and proceeds diverted. Now there's the third term, and it's not what Reagan and his aides envisioned. True, Reagan's back. But this time he's Gerald Ford.

The striking thing about the Ford presidency was its low

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ceiling. No matter what Ford did, there was a sharp limit on how much power and popularity he could accumulate. The lingering effects of Watergate followed by Ford's courageous but unpopular pardon of Nixon made certain of that. Ford was personally well-liked by the public, as is Reagan, but that was of little strategic importance. In political terms, Ford was a eunuch. He had no real agenda, except for the defensive one of fending off challenges by the Democratic Congress. His aim was to muddle through each day and pray for political deliverance through some unexpected event. Reagan is in exactly the same fix. He's a eunuch too.

Weeks ago, the White House abandoned the effort to overcome the drag of Iranamok. There had been hope that Reagan's March 4 speech on the Tower Commission report and his performance at a nationally televised press conference on March 19 would restore his lost popularity, at least a good chunk of it. That didn't happen. All Reagan got was a slight bump in the polls. Now the president's advisers "have come to the conclusion that the skepticism on Iran is so deep that that aspect isn't going to change," says Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman. Fitzwater cites a poll showing that 65 percent of the American people trust Reagan and 65 percent think he's not telling all he knows about Iranamok. In other works, folks trust Reagan, except on the most important issue, Iranamok. "There's probably nothing that can be done to change that," adds Fitzwater. "There's no way to directly deal with the Iran situation that will improve [Reagan's] popularity and approval rating. The best thing is to get on with the other business of government and let Congress handle it."

Reagan's posture is to ignore the congressional hearings on Iranamok. If the president's account of events in the arms sale to Iran or support of the *contras* is frontally assaulted by a witness with firsthand knowledge, the White House must respond, of course. Otherwise, silence. Reagan is devoting the month of May to playing up other issues at the White House and in appearances on the road. A visit to a manufacturing plant in Pennsylvania gives him a platform to boast about the Reagan economic recovery, now in its fifth year. A trip to North Carolina is an opportunity to yap about trade issues. A high school graduation exercise in Tennessee gives him a forum to speak on education and values. For this event, administration officials had to scour the country for a high school at which graduation was in mid-May, which is unusually early. They found what they wanted in Chattanooga. In June Reagan has a trip to Europe for ten days, three of them at the economic summit in Venice—more non-Iranamok busywork.

TAME STUFF, but what do you expect? As much as Reagan would like to steal the nation's attention from Iranamok, he doesn't have a subject big enough for that. He's in the same bind Ford was. Neither Nixon in 1972 nor Ford in 1974 attached their campaigns to specific issues. For Nixon, it was sufficient that he wasn't George McGovern. In the midterm congressional election, Ford stressed process, calling lamely on voters to prevent a "veto-proof Congress." Neither Nixon nor Ford laid the groundwork for moving on substantive issues. Reagan didn't either in 1984 and 1986. His re-election campaign was all good vibrations and no issues. In 1986 he and his advisers fell for a fad, the anti-drug crusade, as Reagan's topic in campaign appearances. The fad has long since faded, and Reagan is now paying the price. He cannot credibly change the subject from Iranamok, for he'll instantly be denounced for pursuing a transparent political ploy. If he'd campaigned for some issue in 1984 and 1986, perhaps even taking some heat for doing so, he'd have that issue to fall back on. But like Ford, he's bereft.

STILL, two issues he largely ignored last fall hold some potential for Reagan, Star Wars and AIDS. The Strategic Defense Initiative, which the president did tout briefly last fall after the Reykjavik summit, is enormously popular, according to polls, and there is national anxiety over the spread of AIDS. But out of fear of worsening his tenuous position, Reagan is frittering these issues away. Politicians get cautious at exactly the time they need to be bold, and when boldness carries the fewest risks. Reagan is no exception. What does he have to lose, politically at any rate, by pushing ahead aggressively on SDI and taking a hard-line on AIDS? Not much. Ford was the same way. Rather than attack inflation vigorously and directly, he tried the WIN (Whip Inflation Now) program. It was an embarrassing failure, but anything more audacious was sure to be controversial. At the Reagan White House, SDI and AIDS are seen as too controversial. The president and his advisers (except those at the Pentagon) were spooked by Senator Sam Nunn's speeches against the broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty, an interpretation required for swift development of Star Wars. So Reagan, like Ford, is left with relying on his veto and tinkering with issues that Democrats in Congress regard as paramount, arms control and the deficit.

On AIDS, Reagan is unwilling to resolve the battle between those who want sterner measures to protect the uninfected, measures such as mandatory testing, and those who don't. During the last week in April, Education Secretary William Bennett and Gary Bauer, the White House domestic policy adviser, spoke publicly in favor of more testing for AIDS. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop spoke strongly against expanded testing. On May 4 the AIDS issue came before a meeting of the Domestic Policy Council that Reagan attended. He signed an order establishing a commission to study AIDS and put off a decision on whether to send letters to every citizen with a warning on how to avoid AIDS. The issue of testing wasn't on the agenda and Reagan never asked about it. The best a White House assistant could say is that "the time may be ripe soon" to bring that issue to Reagan.

To political job seekers, the allure of Reagan's administration matches that of Ford's. There is no queue of eager applicants. True, in a pinch the president can persuade people to sign on, but they are amazingly reluctant. The new communications chief at the White House, Thomas Griscom, took weeks to decide whether to join his old boss,

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chief of staff Howard Baker, or stick with a public relations firm in Washington. Not an easy choice under the circumstances. And Baker, after all, wasn't Reagan's first choice to replace Donald Regan as chief of staff. He was asked only after former Senator Paul Laxalt and ex-Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis declined. The one job that spawned a fight was librarian of Congress, and for good reason: the new librarian will stay on after the Reagan crowd departs. For this position, the White House personnel office shied away from supporting a black (one made the list of finalists) and recommended historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, the wife of neoconservative writer Irving Kristol. The retiring librarian, Daniel Boorstin, had a different idea. He arranged an Oval Office meeting with the president and urged the nomination of James Billington, the director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution. After the meeting, Reagan told aides that Billington was his choice.

So it turns out that Reagan can still be assertive, if the issue is small enough. That's a feature of a weakened administration. Ford would recognize the syndrome. And who says Reagan isn't the arbiter of his own schedule? Why, just last Easter, while Reagan and his wife were vacationing at their ranch in Santa Barbara, he decided that he'd speak at a fund-raiser for AIDS research on May 31. His aides didn't have a thing to do with the decision, which was made when actress Elizabeth Taylor phoned and asked the Reagans to attend the AIDS event. Some White House officials were upset when they heard the news, since the fund-raiser's sponsors include some homosexual organizations that one official said "aren't friendly on this issue." Reagan could use the event to take a strong stand on AIDS testing, for or against. But don't hold your breath.

FRED BARNES

POSTCARD PERU

BUSTED

Some of us are old enough to remember back a few years before World War II when Americans could be anywhere in the world, in a banana republic revolution, in a war, whatever it might be, and all he would have to do is pin a little American flag on his lapel, and he could walk through that war and no one would dare lay a finger on him. . . . How we've let that get away from us, I'll never know. —Ronald Reagan, February 25, 1980.

As we waited to board a flight home out of Lima after a vacation in Argentina, Chile, and Peru, the three of us—my brother Stuart, my friend Hal, and myself, all red-blooded American yuppies—were invited by a polite customs officer into a small room behind the airline ticket counter. The next thing we knew, two customs officials were rummaging through our suitcases, and I was being strip-searched. An officer took out several vials of clear liquid. He squeezed out some of my toothpaste, put it in a vial, and shook it. Nothing happened. He repeated this procedure with our soap, shampoo, eyedrops, after-shave lotion, and aspirin. Finally he took out some pre-soaked towelettes, like the ones they give you after dinner in a fish restaurant. My mother had bought them for me at Fred's Dollar Store in Eupora, Mississippi. The Peruvian officer wrung the liquid soap into the vial. The vial turned blue. The room exploded in pandemonium. "*Tengo gringo con cocaina!*" the agent shouted exultantly into a walkie-talkie. A *gringo* with cocaine. More customs men burst in, handcuffed me, and pushed me against the wall.

A captain of the customs service appeared. He took me to another room—where 15 members of the Lima press corps were waiting. The captain triumphantly displayed the towelettes, which he said held liquid cocaine; a half-empty pump tube of Colgate toothpaste, which he said was for hiding drugs; and the business card from my recent job as campaign manager for Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, which he said showed that I was an important politician.

MEANWHILE, Peru's crack customs team was "testing" our belongings again. One put a few plaster threads from the cast on Hal's broken arm into a vial: "*cocaina*" again. Within five minutes reporters were snapping pictures of us, the captain, the cast, and the towelettes. Next the captain and 15 assistants paraded us to the airport post office. He had a postal clerk take a bag of letters off the postal scales, and replaced them with the towelettes. "Jameson will be charged with carrying 250 grams of cocaine," he announced to the reporters. Hal's cast and insect repellent (which had also tested positive) tipped the scales at almost 800 grams. None of Stuart's belongings tested positive, but they arrested him too, as "a suspicious character."

A couple of hours later, two consular officials from the U.S. Embassy arrived. They had heard a radio broadcast about us. At last, we thought: friends. The embassy officials listened to our story, then responded that "the State Department is not here to act as advocate for Americans arrested abroad." They tried to explain the cumbersome legal procedure we faced. They said all they could do was try to ensure that we were treated no worse than Peruvian prisoners (not reassuring), contact a lawyer (whom we had to pick from an embassy list—a more specific recommendation would have violated their no-advocacy rule), and notify our families. We specifically asked that our parents and friends be told that a phony drug test had found cocaine in our towelettes and cast, that we hoped for a new test to exonerate us, and that we would contact home as soon as possible. We were led off to jail.

There were nine men in the six-by-ten-foot room. The grimy walls were covered with graffiti praising Pope John Paul II, and photos of Ursula Andress (nude) and Peruvian president Alan Garcia (fully clothed). During our eight-day confinement, the inmate population would swell to 20.

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But at least we were famous. The next day a guard handed a couple of tabloids through the iron bars. The headlines and front-page photos made us instant heroes in the cell. Most of the other prisoners were there for smoking cocaine-paste cigarettes. But we were "important American politicians" caught smuggling $400,000 worth of drugs. One paper added that the cocaine in the cast was destined for Ronald Reagan.

The local U.S. consul came to visit us in jail. "You are in a lot of trouble," she said. She did not seem interested in our story that a mistake had been made. She told me I would be held in detention for 15 days, then transferred to a prison for two to four years awaiting trial. The ultimate sentence would be for another ten to 15 years. She seemed to relish her descriptions of the brutal conditions that awaited me in prisons of Peru. Once we were convicted, she said, she would do her best to have us transferred to an American prison, under the terms of a prisoner exchange treaty with Peru. "No guarantee, of course."

THE CONSUL did agree to send a cable—collect—to our families and friends. In our hastily scrawled message, we explained our predicament, implored our families not to come to Peru, and said that we hoped to retain a Peruvian attorney shortly. The consul never sent this cable. She told me later that she withheld it because we were "distraught" when we wrote it. Anyway, a "Citizens' Assistance Officer" from the State Department had already visited our families and told them that Hal and I had been arrested with over a kilogram of cocaine. He didn't mention the cast or the towelettes, or the "test" that had shown them to contain drugs. He simply relayed roughly what the consul had told us: that Hal and I were likely to languish in a Peruvian jail for at least ten years. The official told Hal's mother that her son "should have known better" since he was a lawyer.

Meanwhile, in jail, we wore the same fetid clothes every day. We got out twice a day: at 8 a.m. for a shower and toilet break (for the rest of the time the only facilities were Inca Cola bottles), and at midday for our only meal: undercooked meat, greasy fries, and rancid tea. Hal, Stuart, and I got this special treat by buying it from the police. The others got bread and soup. Sleep was almost impossible. Even when I managed to find an open patch of concrete, there were stinking, sweating feet in my face, and a body across my legs or chest. The only way to relieve the excruciating back pain was to stand up—which meant giving up precious floor space.

Back home, our families were in a panic. A Boston attorney flew to Mississippi to tell my mother that if she acted soon he might get us released; if she waited, I might be stuck for years in a Peruvian prison. The fee was $40,000. She almost paid; it seemed reasonable compared to a Miami lawyer's price of $150,000 per person.

Finally, after six days of confinement, we got good news. Thanks to a new drug test carried out in a laboratory, the police were convinced that our personal items were not hiding drugs. The vials that had brought us under suspicion contained a chemical that reacts to ether, which is used in making both cocaine and plaster casts. It also seems to react to other chemicals in insect repellents and moist towelettes. After a few days we were on our way home.

In a subsequent letter to Hal, the director of the State Department's Citizens' Emergency Center, Jack Adams, said he was sorry our cable had not been sent. He said the message had been forgotten in the "confusion." As for our complaints about the information our families got from the Citizens' Assistance Officer, he asked us to "understand" that such briefings "will always be less informative than those directly from our embassy because they are working only with the information received by telegram and short telephone conversations."

Of course the government can't protect Americans wherever we go, Ollie North notwithstanding. Americans do commit crimes abroad, and they have no right to expect a bailout from the State Department. But that doesn't mean officers of the U.S. government should be casual about the presumption of innocence. Adams denied that the State Department assumed guilt in our case, but added: "It is not appropriate for officers to speculate on the probable innocence of an arrested citizen"—even though all we asked his staff to do was tell our families that *we* said we were innocent.

"We cannot impose our legal, judicial, or social standards on foreign countries," Adams sniffed—a principle that, if applied, would invalidate about half of American foreign policy.

JOHN JAMESON

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BLACKS AND WHITES, I

PULLING PUNCHES

A CRUSADING NEWSPAPER learns that the mayor's ex-wife, who was sent to jail for siphoning funds from a city housing project (a scandal exposed in part by this very newspaper), has been released and immediately given a $28,000-a-year job with the city parole board, assigned to study the needs of women in prison. Page one, would you say? Not at the *Washington Post*, which sat on the story for three days in March and finally ran a brief item on page D5 in its "Update on the News" column. The explanation for this bizarre news judgment lies in events at the paper last fall.

The first issue of the newly revamped *Washington Post Magazine*, which came out Sunday, September 7, 1986, has become a journalistic legend—but not at all the legend the *Post*'s editors had hoped. The *Post* spent $250,000 promoting the magazine before it appeared and was prepared to lose

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$10 million before the new format began to turn a profit.

The first issue's cover story was about a black would-be rap-singing star from New York who was accused of killing a Washington drug dealer. "We could have done a political profile, but that would have been predictable," said editor Jay Lovinger, who was drafted by the *Post* from *People* magazine. "We wanted to give the message that this wasn't going to be another white, yuppie, advertiser-oriented publication." The issue also contained an adventurous essay by liberal *Post* columnist Richard Cohen expressing sympathy for merchants who refuse to let black youths into their shops for fear of being robbed.

TEN DAYS before the issue was released, copies of the magazine began to circulate in the newsroom. "Everybody complimented me on it," says John Ed Bradley, who wrote the cover story. "I even rode down in the elevator with Don Graham [the *Post*'s publisher]. He thought it was interesting." Out of dozens of *Post* reporters, black and white, who spoke to Bradley, not one expressed any foreboding. On the Tuesday after publication Bradley received his first death threat.

Cathy Liggins Hughes, owner of WOL-AM, a leading Washington call-in radio station with a primarily black audience, claims that when she arrived at work at 6:15 Monday morning, every phone line was already lit up with callers who were outraged by the new magazine. She says her own reaction was: "It made me want to regurgitate. I ran through the house screaming no! no! no!" Hughes asserts that the black community had heard that the first issue of the *Post Magazine* was going to feature a black. But: "We assumed someone like Bill Cosby, [Georgetown basketball coach] John Thompson, Oprah Winfrey. I never dreamed they would put a black thug on the cover." A pre-publication prototype of the magazine had featured prominent white lawyer Edward Bennett Williams on the cover, pictured in a flowered armchair, cuddling a Labrador pup. Pointing from the reassuring portrait of Williams to the sinister profile of Joseph "Justice" Williams Jr., Hughes remarked, "You don't go from that to *this* unless there's some sort of malicious intent."

Hughes devoted all three hours of her morning talk show to the magazine and began organizing a protest as soon as she got off the air. The following Sunday hundreds of black Washingtonians gathered outside the *Post* to dump thousands of copies of the despised magazine onto the front steps. This ritual was repeated every Sunday for the next 13 weeks.

There is a widespread feeling among blacks in Washington that the *Post*—effectively a monopoly newspaper—pays insufficient attention to, and doesn't understand, the black community (70 percent of the city's population, though a much smaller fraction of the metropolitan area). The *Post Magazine* protest tapped into a specific resentment of middle-class blacks, who see themselves as being constantly identified with the black underclass.

Hughes herself is a great self-made success story. She went to work as a telephone operator at the age of 14 and was married and divorced by 17. In 1980, after becoming general manager of Howard University's radio station, she bought WOL radio and is now a leader of the community. She remarked that after 15 years in Washington the only time she had seen a black face displayed prominently in the *Post* was "when there was a crime or a scandal involved."

This is an absurd exaggeration. Black resentment of the *Post* may be widespread, but Hughes and other black leaders had their own reasons for inflaming this resentment. The protest doubled WOL's sagging market share from 0.9 percent to 1.7 percent—a healthy return on the $76,000 that the station plowed into the protest. In addition, Hughes was trying to drum up support for a black buyout of WKYS-FM, Washington's top-rated radio station. Hughes hopes to merge WKYS and WOL into a black radio empire. She needed publicity. (Hughes previously was active in an ugly campaign to drive an Asian grocer out of a black neighborhood.)

There was a political angle, too. Hughes claims to be a Republican who doesn't "fit into the political equation in this town," but she is generally thought of as a strong supporter of Democratic Mayor Marion Barry. In 1984, when the mayor was besieged by charges of corruption and drug use, Hughes sponsored a highly publicized "Appreciation Day" for him. Barry was up for re-election in November. Although the *Post*'s endorsement had helped him win his first mayor's race in 1978, the paper recently had shown signs of becoming less enthusiastic. It could only help to have the *Post* on the defensive during an election campaign. Hughes's anti-*Post* campaign had enthusiastic support from D.C.'s non-voting congressional delegate, Walter Fauntroy, who is close to Barry and regularly complains about the lack of coverage he gets from the *Post*.

ON OCTOBER 5 executive editor Ben Bradlee printed a formal apology on the *Post*'s op-ed page, "for the offense that two articles in the first issue plainly—if inadvertently—gave to certain segments of our audience." This act of journalistic humility was unprecedented, and—for anyone who knew Bradlee (or had seen Jason Robards play him in *All the President's Men*)—astonishing. Bradlee asserted that a profile of George Bush had been slated for the first issue but fell through at the last minute. (Not true, Lovinger says.)

But the protesters were not assuaged, and the copies of the magazine continued to land on the *Post*'s doorstep, totaling 252,693 by December. Perversely, several prominent blacks who were scheduled to be profiled in the magazine, including former Mayor Walter Washington, withdrew their cooperation out of "solidarity" with Hughes's campaign. After insisting for months that the *Post* scrap the magazine entirely, the boycott committee altered its demands to include that one entire issue of the magazine explore the negative portrayal of blacks, that an external monitoring process be established, and that a black editor screen all "sensitive" articles before publication.

Then, in December, Donald Graham agreed to appear on

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Hughes's talk show for three consecutive days, and to return twice a year for the next ten years. On the air Graham claimed not to have read the issue before it was distributed (in contrast to what John Ed Bradley claims Graham told him in the elevator). He said that the *Post*'s editing system had broken down, and promised more sensitive coverage in the future. In return, Hughes announced the end of the boycott campaign. Other members of the committee, including Fauntroy, denounced her for selling out the protest.

BUT HUGHES got more than she appeared to at first. The week after the protest ended, the *Post Magazine*'s cover story, entitled "A Joyful Noise," was a vacuous human-interest puffer on a black Baptist church in Georgetown, complete with adorable choir girls in white lace. The same issue contained a feature article on a long-suffering black crossing guard. This was Hughes's kind of journalism. "It looks just like *Ebony*," she enthused. That same week the *Post* Style section—not usually known for its heavy coverage of black cultural and social events—led with features on blacks four times. At the end of the month the *Post* kicked off a gushy three-part series on "The New Black Woman"—people such as Caroline R. Jones, "a stylish and sophisticated divorcée [who] circles the globe on business and meets men of every nationality." Later the *Post Magazine* ran another vacuous cover story celebrating the joys of Black History Month.

Although some of these stories had been in the works for over a year, their sudden appearance smelled of appeasement. Less upbeat stories—such as a piece on the difficulties black lawyers face in top firms and a study of how black youths discourage academic achievement among their peers—were now trimmed with cheery exceptions and other life-enhancing qualifications. The story about anti-academic peer pressure, for example, had four paragraphs about various programs to solve the problem before explaining what exactly the problem was.

The *Post*'s coverage of the Barry administration, never fearsome, also changed noticeably. A long story by reporter Sharon LaFraniere about how the District government's minority contracting program was enriching cronies of the mayor was held up until after the election. This was enough time for the *Washington Times* to come up with its own story. Meanwhile, the *Post* piece was watered down by metropolitan editor Milton Coleman, and then reconstructed after reporters and other editors complained, according to several members of the *Post* Metro staff.

In October city hall reporter Ed Bruske discovered that the supposedly full-time $70,000-a-year director of the D.C. Alcohol and Drug Services Administration was spending two days a week teaching at a college in Baltimore. Barry had learned of the moonlighting but had persuaded the aide not to resign until after the election. Coleman killed this story, reportedly saying that there was "nothing illegal" involved. Again, the *Washington Times* got the story and published it. The *Post*'s version ran nearly a month after the election, at the end of a story about Barry's announcement that the man was leaving. In a similar episode, a story about unanswered phone calls to the city's 911 system was postponed until Barry held a press conference announcing plans to overhaul it. The mayor's reforms became the lead, and the problems were pushed to the bottom.

When Coleman tried to squelch the story about Mary Treadwell, Barry's ex-wife, there was a newsroom revolt. Metro reporters drew up a list of more than a dozen critical stories on the Barry administration that had been watered down, held, or killed. And in recent weeks the paper seems to have found its bearings again, although it was scooped once again by the *Washington Times* in early May with a story about the remarried Barry's relentless pursuit of a young model. (Amusingly, a sympathetic cover piece on Barry in the *Post Magazine* the previous Sunday carried the headline: "The Mayor Who Can't Bear To Be Rejected.")

IN 1970, responding to an in-house survey about editorial biases, William Raspberry, a black columnist with the *Post*, wrote: "If you were a Martian and read nothing but the *Washington Post* you would think this city is inhabited by five kinds of people—Georgetown and Northwest whites, black militants at 14th and U, black criminals, black welfare mothers." The *Post*'s response to criticism like this has been earnest but erratic. Its coverage of the majority-black city in which it is located has been sometimes almost nonexistent, sometimes patronizingly protective, only sometimes aggressive in the way normally associated with the *Washington Post*.

What the Washington black elite wants from the *Post* is what elites everywhere want and often get from their local paper: puffery and a lack of curiosity about misdeeds. The difference is that, as a great newspaper, the *Post* knows better. But its position as a predominantly white institution in a predominantly black city leaves it torn. Juan Williams, who covered Mayor Barry for the *Post* from 1978 to 1982 and does not think highly of him, says that *Post* editors "feel hamstrung by liberal guilt about the way that they have handled black coverage generally. Suddenly the beneficiary of all that guilt is a guy who's getting away with murder as mayor. But the victims of the scandals and the mismanagement of public housing, the jails, and the schools are all black."

The real risk is not that the *Post* will run too much black puffery (since it certainly runs enough puffery on white subjects), but that it will avoid honest coverage of the black community and the local black power structure. One of the articles that Cathy Hughes's committee identified as objectionable was an outstanding and widely praised three-part series by Leon Dash on the causes of teenage pregnancy—an article the Pulitzer Prize committee astounded everyone by overlooking. Would that series have run today?

CROCKER COULSON

Crocker Coulson is a former TNR researcher-reporter.

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BLACKS AND WHITES, II

CAMPUS CONTROVERSY

REPORTS OF A racial brawl at Columbia came as an emotional shock to many who know the university. On March 22 students began to hear accounts of an attack on black students by a group of whites early that morning outside the Plex, an on-campus night spot. Later that day, students demonstrated outside the fraternity where the alleged instigators of the incident lived, demanding that the attackers be brought to justice. Columbia president Michael Sovern issued a pained statement swearing that racism had no place at Columbia. The New York media speculated about why an act of blatant racism could occur at such a prestigious liberal institution.

While there was relief that no one had been seriously hurt (one black student was treated for a laceration), accounts that a black had been chased into traffic on Broadway brought to mind the incident at Howard Beach three months earlier, in which a black man pursued by white teenagers ran onto a highway and was killed by a car. Like Howard Beach, the Plex incident prompted a wave of demonstrations, civil disobedience, and allegations.

But the picture that now emerges from Columbia's month of strife reveals less about what *Time* magazine recently called "an upsurge of racism" on college campuses than about the politics of racial polarization as currently practiced in New York City. The first and most widely circulated account of the incident was put forth by the Concerned Black Students at Columbia (CBSC), a group of roughly a dozen students that first became known on campus the day following the event. On March 23 they issued the first of a series of press releases and announced their retention of attorney C. Vernon Mason. CBSC alleged that the fight erupted when a black student asked a white football player to stop harassing him. The black student, they said, was then surrounded by a "white mob," given a blow to the back of the head, and "punched, knocked to the ground, kicked and stomped repeatedly." Then, still according to CBSC, the situation "escalated into a lynch mob," with white students shouting, "We're going to kill you fucking niggers" and assaulting black students and black campus security guards. Soon after the press release, hundreds of handbills appeared in Harlem and other black neighborhoods as far away as Brooklyn and Queens, proclaiming that "at Columbia University—mob of white students attacks black students." The names of four white students, two with photographs, were listed in bold type under the headline: "WANTED: RACISTS AT LARGE."

As preparations began all over town for a rally against Columbia racism, other versions of the incident began to circulate. The four accused whites denied instigating anything. The Columbia College Student Council produced a 12-page "information packet" that contained a CBSC statement—but also several other eyewitness accounts that differed dramatically from the CBSC version. Immediately after the incident, both Columbia's dean of students and the racial bias unit of the New York Police Department began investigations. Black students filed charges with the police against the four whites.

But it wasn't easy to determine what happened. The black student who had required medical attention made an appointment with the two college deans investigating the incident, but did not appear. The next day another appointment was scheduled, by this student and other blacks involved in the incident. These appointments were canceled. Several days later, the police announced that the investigation by its bias unit was also hampered, because the black complainants refused to be interviewed. Shortly thereafter the steering committee of CBSC announced that attorney Mason had instructed the students not to cooperate with the university or police investigations. Mason accused the police of "bad faith" for not arresting the white students.

This was not a new tactic for Mason. He had previously represented the Rev. Lee Johnson, a black seminary student, who was allegedly jailed and beaten without cause by police. After Mason instructed his client not to cooperate—to record what he called "a vote of no-confidence" in the system—a grand jury refused to indict the officers involved. Mason also represented one of the victims in the Howard Beach case. He advised his client not to cooperate with the district attorney prosecuting the white assailants.

While the university and police investigations were stalled by the refusal of black students to testify, the charge that Columbia and the police were protecting the perpetrators of the incident was aired both at rallies and in the black press. Two weeks after the incident, Mason asserted at a rally that if the white students weren't arrested soon, "people in Harlem would come up by the thousands" to do it themselves. Twenty-three members and supporters of CBSC were arrested after a sit-in at Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward's office, where they demanded the arrest of the white students.

Columbia released its own reconstruction of the Plex incident a month after it took place. Release of the 1800-word report was delayed while the Columbia deans reiterated their requests for the black students who claimed to have been attacked to come forward. They did not. The university's account, prepared by two deans, was based on interviews with, and signed statements by, 22 eyewitnesses—students and security guards. As long as the investigation of the city's racial bias unit is stymied, this report is the most comprehensive account available.

ACCORDING TO THE report, sharp words were exchanged inside the Plex between a white student (a football player) and a black student who worked there. These two students are said to have not liked each other for some time. The black student spilled beer on the white student, who then touched the black student's

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head, saying, "Nice hair, buddy" or words to that effect. A little later, at 2 a.m., when the Plex closed, a departing white student was confronted by a group of blacks—including the student mentioned above and others who were not Columbia students. The black student said, "False alarm, this isn't the one we want," and the group withdrew. The blacks continued to wait outside the Plex—one reportedly said, "I'm going to get him." Many witnesses claimed to have stayed around because they anticipated that something was about to happen. Minutes later, five white students emerged, among them the one who had said, "Nice hair, buddy." The group of five to seven black men met them, then formed a circle around the two principals and appeared to be trying to restrain them. Only parts of the conversation were overheard. The black student was heard to say, "It's got to stop, you've got to stop, all I want is respect . . ." He then walked away, but he and his friends came back when the principal white student said, "What's this . . . Ah man, fuck you."

At this point, two other white students came out of the Plex. One of them, without provocation, was hit by an unidentified black man. His hat was taken, and as he raced after it on Broadway he was jumped on by several black men. After that scuffles erupted outside the Plex and in the surrounding area. Both blacks and whites were knocked to the ground. Security guards tried to intervene and were taunted by a black woman shouting "Uncle Tom" and "you love your white brothers." In one confrontation, a black person called to a white student to fight. The two sparred, and the white student chased the black into the street. Walking back up Broadway, this white shouted, "Goddam fucking niggers . . . I'm going to kill you fucking niggers." The entire incident lasted three to five minutes. The student who shouted the racial epithets is being disciplined by the university.

SPEAKERS AT an on-campus rally after the release of the university report branded it a "whitewash." Mason charged cover-up. Columbia officials regretted that the black students who claimed to have been assaulted refused to come forward. Most students I have spoken to find the report credible. One eyewitness to the incident, a non-white woman, told me—before the report was released—that the initial confrontation, between the two students and their friends, involved four whites and 12 blacks. An editor of the college newspaper privately related that several black students of the editor's acquaintance who witnessed the event were pressured by CBSC not to tell what they saw. The reluctance of Columbia students to be quoted for attribution is one pervasive consequence of the spring's events.

On campus, the protest campaign changed its focus after the first weeks. Most students felt CBSC's "wanted posters" were needlessly inflammatory, and the group's original account seemed less credible as more information came out. But other incidents have kept attention on racial questions. In one case a group of 60 students, former students, and supporters not affiliated with the university scuffled with campus security guards and entered a campus dormitory to confront the owner of a Confederate flag on display that could be seen from the street. CBSC circulated more accounts of white harassment. Students and outside supporters of CBSC chained shut the college's main classroom building, and city police were brought on campus to arrest them. Campus rallies with speakers from the African National Congress and New York's black community, attracting participants from self-styled radical groups from around the city, have portrayed the university itself as a "bedrock of racism."

Columbia officials deeply resent this charge. Between eight and 11 percent of Columbia College students are black—a figure that has inched upward over the past ten years. Eighty percent of blacks receive major financial assistance from the university, over twice the proportion of whites. "Basically," said Dean of Students Robert Pollack, in a remark that illustrates just how bitter some administrators are, "this is a created event, a created event in the same way that the Germans were able to invade Poland after being able to prove that Poland first attacked them."

According to Pollack, black students who don't want to be drawn into the campaign against their college have suffered the most. He said that three black students had come to him in tears, unable to sleep, study, or concentrate since the CBSC measures began. Many other black students have told Pollack that they were scared—because they were being ostracized and forced to choose between racial solidarity and their school. He says he has no way to help them.

MOST WHITE STUDENTS have long ago concluded that the Plex affair was "blown out of proportion" and have gone back to their books—though it is widely agreed that the incident and its aftermath have brought heightened awareness of race to the campus. But C. Vernon Mason has received prominent and favorable coverage in the city's black press, and he and Alton Maddox Jr. are preparing to file a complaint against Columbia for "fostering a climate of racism." Referring to the Plex affair, Maddox has mocked Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward, who is black, as powerless to arrest whites. CBSC leaders and supporters have charged that New York's elected black officials don't care about their plight. At CBSC rallies, speakers have promised a "long hot summer" ahead. New York's largest black newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, recently editorialized that the "attack on black students" outside the Plex may prove to be "the spark that ignited New York City." Clearly there are people who hope it will be.

SCOTT MCCONNELL

Scott McConnell received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia this spring.

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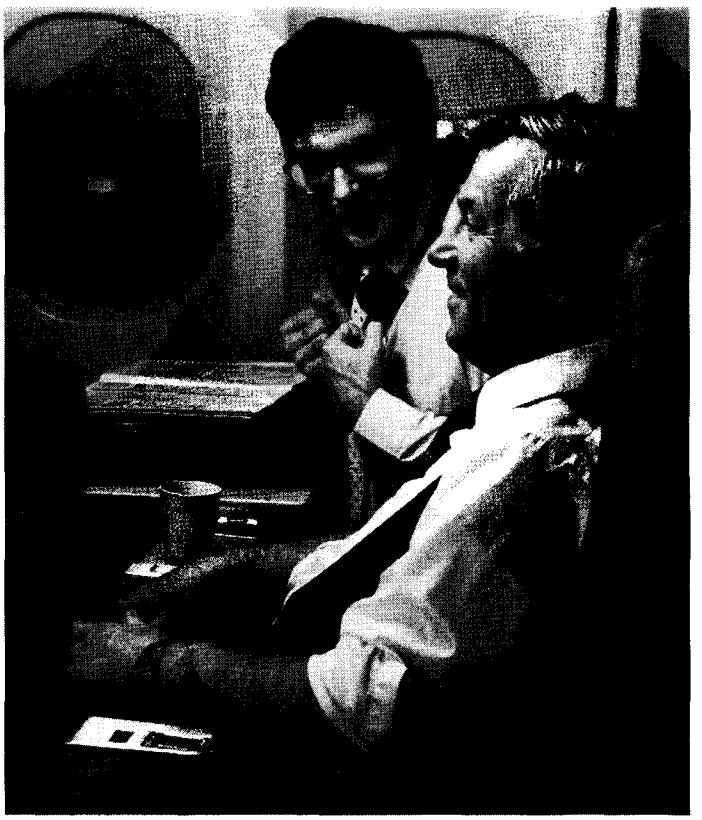

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The strategic planning of the Iran-contra operation.

OLLIE'S BLUEPRINT

BY JEFFERSON MORLEY

THE MOST interesting question of the Iran-*contra* affair is not how high the official misdeeds went but how low. The active involvement of President Reagan is now apparent. The Tower Commission documented how his closest aides received presidential direction on even small details of the Iranian arms deal. The guilty plea of Carl "Spitz" Channell, a right-wing fund-raiser, also implicates the president. Channell brought wealthy donors to meet with Reagan in the Oval Office. Reagan denies knowing what the money would be used for. But Oliver North wrote to John Poindexter in May 1986 that "the president obviously knows why he has been meeting with several select people to thank them for their 'support for Democracy' in Cent[ral] Am[erica]."

Much less obvious is how the Reagan administration managed to execute the clandestine foreign policies that Congress had specifically forbidden. How did the administration enlist so many people in the arms-for-hostages deal and the secret *contra* war, and how did it coordinate their far-flung activities? If only logistically, these operations were impressive.

Thus far Congress and the media have tried three different theories of how the scandal happened. The first was that North and other National Security Council "cowboys" were "out of control." This theory has been discarded as it has become clear that North kept his superiors well-informed of his adventures. The second is that the NSC staff was "inept." The problem with this theory is that for all their alleged ineptitude the White House ran a full-scale multimillion-dollar guerrilla war in defiance of an explicit congressional prohibition. A third possibility is now beginning to dawn on the Washington press corps. "Did the president and a few trusted advisers operate in a calculated manner outside the law and their own regulations . . . ?" the *Washington Post* asked on the eve of the congressional hearings.

The president did, and he had the help not merely of "a few trusted advisers" but of dozens of administration officials. As early as March 1983—a full year before most press accounts say the scandal began—administration officials were devising the strategies that would be used in both the Iranian arms deal and the *contra* war. Moreover, they did so publicly and in accordance with Reagan's ideology. One example of such strategic planning was a conference on "Special Operations in U.S. Strategy" held in Washington on March 4 and 5, 1983.

The stated purpose of the conference was "to focus attention on a larger potential role for special operations in the 1980s." It was sponsored by a non-partisan think tank called the National Strategy Information Center, by Georgetown University, and by the National Defense University. In attendance were about 125 military officers, intelligence agents, Reagan administration officials, Pentagon consultants, and conservative journalists. An obscure major from the staff of the National Security Council named Oliver North was in the audience.

The national security bureaucrats who attended this gathering hammered out in fairly precise detail many of the different strategies Oliver North later used to execute President Reagan's clandestine foreign policies between 1983 and 1986. The conference was no secret: an edited version of the proceedings was published by the government. Thus while reporters scramble for high-level sources and senators grill witnesses, a blueprint for the scandal entitled *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy* (now in its second printing) is available for $4.25 from the Government Printing Office.

Special operations were a staple in the Reagan military buildup. Such operations, in the words of one speaker at the conference, are "small-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox and frequently high-risk nature, undertaken to achieve significant political or military objectives in support of foreign policy." The administration has nearly doubled spending on U.S. Special Forces, the military unit specifically designed for special operations. While this buildup was applauded by the conference participants, it was seen as only a first step toward effectively integrating special operations into U.S. foreign policy.

It is no surprise that North was interested. He reportedly conducted special operations in Vietnam and earned several medals, before being relieved of his duties for emotional distress. He returned to active duty and in 1981 was appointed to the NSC (the hospitalization having been purged from his file), where he would become deputy director of "political-military affairs." The prevailing tone of the conference was also no doubt congenial to North. In his portentous keynote address, Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh Jr. declared, "The die for our society may well be cast within the next few years. . . . The Visigoth and the Vandal are with us yet." Sound familiar? Sure: this is just how Ollie North talks.

The timing of the conference was important too. In March 1983 the administration was in the throes of overhauling its Central America military policy. That month the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, returned from a trip to the region and declared that it was "in crisis." Two years of Reagan policy in Central

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America had not made much progress. In Nicaragua, the *contras* were not going to topple the Sandinistas by the summer of 1983 (as CIA officials had predicted), and in El Salvador, the armed forces were killing thousands of civilians but still losing ground to leftist insurgents.

The administration's first step in solving the problem was the creation of the Kissinger Commission in June 1983, which President Reagan described as "a means of building a national consensus on a comprehensive United States policy for the region." Militarily, policy-makers wanted to increase aid to the *contras* and embark on what the Kissinger Commission called an "enlightened counterinsurgency campaign" in El Salvador. But the bigger problem was political. The administration needed to overcome substantial and persistent public reluctance to become militarily involved.

The special operations conference was based on the premise that the military methods had to be tailored to the political realities of the 1980s. In the words of the conference organizers, "an untutored American public" showed "little enthusiasm for unconventional acts in time of 'formal peace.' " As a result, they said, "The United States must develop diverse and even novel ways to defend its economic and geopolitical interests when these are affected by unconventional conflicts, especially in the Third World."

The discussion of these strategies took two forms at the conference. The first was a replay of the long-standing "hearts and minds" debate among U.S. military strategists. The second debate concerned the difficulties of conducting special operations within the constraints of U.S. public opinion.

Edward Luttwak, a civilian strategist and Pentagon consultant on Central America, thought the desire to win hearts and minds distracted from military goals. He expressed admiration for the single-mindedness of the armed forces of Guatemala. "Even a bad army can win a guerrilla war," Luttwak observed, "if it uses the appropriate tactics and methods systematically." At the time, the Guatemalan army's tactics (according to the Organization of American States) included "the destruction, burning, and plundering of entire campesino villages." Douglas Blaufarb, a former CIA official, disagreed with Luttwak's thesis. "To destroy homes and property, to kill and maim the civilian population is counterproductive," he suggested. Excessive brutality, Blaufarb suggested, was why "the results of our security assistance continue to disappoint us" in El Salvador. (Luttwak said the problem in El Salvador was just the opposite: insufficient "determination to win.")

The second, more extensive and more interesting discussion concerned how to deal with North American hearts and minds. It was launched by William V. O'Brien, identified as a professor of government at Georgetown University, in his lecture on "Special Operations in the 1980s: American Moral, Legal, Political, and Cultural Constraints." Over the course of the conference, O'Brien and others applauded the administration's efforts to coax the public and the Pentagon out of their post-Vietnam reluctance to intervene militarily. But most of the participants were pessimistic that such efforts would succeed. Theodore Shackley, another former high-ranking CIA official, noted that "an innate dislike for special operations by the mainstream of American political life will, perforce, limit Washington to a defensive mode in considering irregular warfare options."

A ROUGH CONSENSUS was reached on the need to proceed quietly. A retired British officer suggested that if public opinion could not be won over, elite opinion might be. "The concept of special operations as required today must be marketed and sold—in a subtle way perhaps—to generals, admirals, Cabinet members, congressmen, and ambassadors," he said. Blaufarb recommended that any initiative to upgrade and consolidate special operations "should be kept low-key, with a minimum of fanfare." Blaufarb noted that "as program proposals emerge, the question of funding would certainly come to the fore" but suggested that "the relatively modest amounts involved" would not arouse public ire. With such an organization in place, pre-emptive special operations could win public approval after the fact. "It is a hard, but true, fact of life," Professor O'Brien noted, "that success overcomes a lot of moral, legal, political, and cultural scruples."

Marsh himself suggested one Reaganesque way to transcend what he delicately described as the "limitations of our current defense structure." He proposed transferring some of the tasks of special operations to the private sector. (As one right-wing analyst with a knack for self-parody describes it, "Privatizing the Reagan Doctrine.") Marsh cited "economic, political, and psychological warfare" in particular. "This is an enormous area in which private sector resources can be used," he said.

By common consent, the top priority was to create what Roger M. Pezzelle, a former aide to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called "a joint special operations organization at the national level." Shackley envisioned "a special element of government dedicated to the multiple tasks of counterinsurgency, guerrilla warfare, and anti-terrorist operations." He said it "might bring a fresh and dynamic approach to these pressing needs."

Many participants, though, argued that rivalries between the Pentagon, State Department, intelligence community, and other agencies would probably kill any formal initiative. There had to be a new bureaucratic nerve center. John Norton Moore, identified as a law professor from the University of Virginia, argued for "improved control mechanisms . . . at levels above those of the armed forces." Blaufarb made Moore's implication explicit by saying that the only special operations command with the "necessary authority" to overcome bureaucratic rivalries and Pentagon resistance "probably would have to be located in the White House staff, which means the National Security Council." He added that "unless the highest authority, namely the president, gives his strong support" the venture would probably fail.

In the final discussion of the conference, devoted to "organizational strategy," participants developed the concept. Kenneth Bergquist, a deputy assistant secretary of the

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Army, said that special operations commanders "should work within the system—if necessary by expanding the size and resources of the NSC." Sam Sarkesian, a political scientist, stressed that whatever reforms were adopted, one task was essential: "To devise an organizational strategy that is linked to the existing system, but one that provides enough freedom of maneuver for developing flexible and imaginative responses."

Sarkesian and Bergquist agreed that unconventional tactics had to be used not only against America's adversaries but on the American political system itself. Sarkesian said that if the existing structure of the NSC could not be changed, he would favor "the gadfly approach—the insertion of specialists within the existing system to goad and pressure those in command to make the right decisions." Bergquist agreed. By "using special operations techniques on the system, the system could probably be made to work," he said.

During this discussion, someone identified as a member of the NSC staff, probably North himself, spoke up. The conference proceedings state: "Citing his own experience with the National Security Council and its small staff, he saw the latter as incapable—even with strong support from the president—of doing more than setting broad policy and issue decision documents." Specifically, this NSC staff member said, "Serious coordination of the myriad intelligence agencies and State and Defense department components is beyond their [the NSC staffers'] capability." He added his view that any new unified special operations command had to include psychological operations and psychological warfare. It is not absolutely certain that the speaker was North (there was one other NSC staff member present), but it certainly sounds like him, especially given North's fondness for psychological operations.

IT IS CERTAIN that by 1983 North was gaining influence on the administration's Central America policy. In the summer of 1983 North accompanied the Kissinger Commission on its tour of Central America. (In Nicaragua North quipped that he was the advance man for the U.S. invasion.) In October 1983 North gained prestige for his still-shadowy role in the invasion of Grenada. And in December 1983 North accompanied Vice President Bush on an important mission to El Salvador. By early 1984 North had reportedly sent national security adviser Robert McFarlane a memo proposing the creation of a private aid network for the *contras*. According to Associated Press reporters Robert Parry and Brian Barger, McFarlane then orally briefed Reagan on the plan and Reagan approved. By late 1984 something resembling "a joint special operations organization at the national level" was functioning and under North's control.

North's synthesis of the ideas presented at the conference was at once obvious and ingenious (although the participants had not advocated that U.S. law be broken). North combined "private sector resources" (as Marsh suggested) with a "gadfly" network "to goad and pressure" the State Department, Pentagon, and intelligence community (as Sarkesian proposed). This enabled North to effectively expand "the size and the resources" of the NSC staff (as Bergquist suggested) and still keep the whole operation "low-key" (as Blaufarb urged). When "the question of funding came to the fore," (as Blaufarb predicted), North avoided the controversy of using government funds by diverting the profits of the Iran arms deal into the *contra* operation.

In Shackley's prescription cum description, North's operation was "dedicated to the multiple tasks of counter-insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and anti-terrorist operations." North was attempting to direct the "enlightened counterinsurgency effort" in El Salvador, to assist the *contras* in their guerrilla war, and to conduct anti-terrorist operations in the Middle East.

INDEED, Shackley, Sarkesian, and Luttwak seem to have been part of the "special element" that was "linked to the existing system." Shackley is a legendary figure who ran the CIA's covert war in Laos in the mid-1960s. While there he met Richard Secord, North's right-hand man in setting up the Iran arms deal and the secret *contra* network. Ousted from the CIA during the Carter years, Shackley has since been involved in shady dealings in the Middle East. No surprise, then, that the Tower Commission discovered that the first person to put the NSC in contact with Iranians interested in dealing arms for hostages in late 1984 was one Theodore Shackley.

Luttwak and Sarkesian also worked closely with North and other gadflies who wanted to prod the bureaucracy to execute the clandestine policy. The two consultants were named to a seven-member panel (which included at least three other close friends of North's) on a top-secret mission to El Salvador in August 1984. The panel produced a classified seven-page report that is reportedly highly critical of the Pentagon's unimaginative tactics.

Through Carl Channell, North tapped "private sector resources" to buy weapons for the *contras*. North also used his private aid to wage "political and psychological warfare," as Marsh had recommended. He relied on Channell to produce television ads attacking the foes of aid to the *contras*. (The "untutored public" didn't learn its lesson: almost all of the *contra* opponents targeted by Channell were re-elected.) More effective was North's funding of moderate Nicaraguan opposition politicians and Washington policy intellectuals who could articulate the case for administration policy among the capital elite. In this way, the idea of North's special operation command was, as the British gentleman urged, "marketed and sold—in a subtle way perhaps" to a Washington elite that had previously deferred to public opinion.

And the ingredient that made it possible to wage a secret war and sell arms to the Iranians was "the White House leadership" that Blaufarb, Sarkesian, and others recognized was so important. This was the ultimate improvement in "control mechanisms . . . at levels above those of the armed forces." The professor of government had it right: "success" overcame a lot of moral, legal, cultural, and political scruples. □

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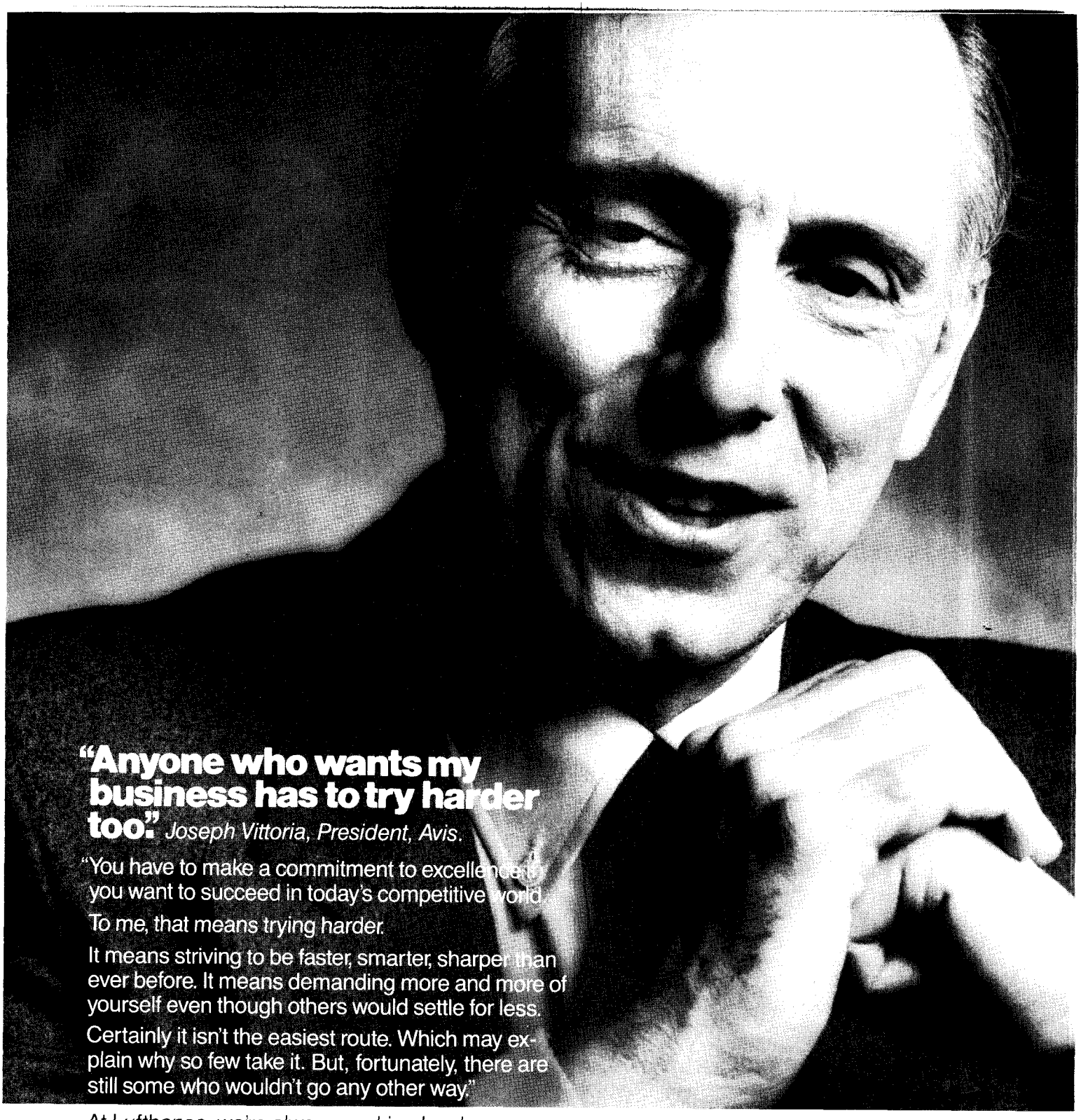
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Russia's answer to Nixon.

WHAT GORBACHEV WANTS

BY STEPHEN SESTANOVICH

I don't remember who, but somebody said that foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy. —Mikhail Gorbachev

WHAT DOES the world's largest producer of tanks, military aircraft, and ballistic missiles want? And will it want less if its attention turns more to problems at home? General Secretary Gorbachev says his country faces a "crisis" that only a "revolution" can solve. His rhetoric outstrips his actions, and both may yet outstrip his political support, but the changes under way in the Soviet Union are already the most far-reaching in 30 years. So far-reaching, in fact, that Gorbachev insists they are of great practical interest to Americans. "If we . . . are setting ourselves such truly grandiose plans in the domestic sphere," he asked in *Time*, "then what are the external conditions that we need to be able to fulfill our domestic plans?"

The tie between domestic and foreign policy is now the supreme Sovietological question. Gorbachev's own answer (seconded by Andrei Sakharov) is that accumulated Soviet problems demand relief from international competition. Lowering tension abroad is necessary to rebuilding at home. This is "where we want to direct our resources," Gorbachev told Western celebrities gathered in Moscow in February. "This is where our thoughts are going, these are our real programs and purposes, on this we intend to spend the intellectual energy of our society."

The claim that trouble at home inhibits activism abroad has let loose great hopes in the West for more reasonable Soviet diplomacy. It certainly has the ring of common sense. And yet many writers on international affairs have given exactly the opposite reading. Soviet expansionism, they say, is not an obstacle to solving domestic difficulties, but a way of coping with them. In this view, Soviet foreign policy, especially under Leonid Brezhnev, became a device to win obedience and respect from a population that might otherwise reject its miserable lot.

In other words, domestic troubles, far from restraining activism abroad, are said to *stimulate* it. As if to turn Gorbachev on his head, Richard Pipes has written that "international tension and the specter of war . . . are vital to the interests of the Communist elite." And not just tension: expansion too is a "domestic imperative." Because "the best way to demonstrate the need for a powerful Communist state and military establishment is constantly to expand the Communist realm."

The Soviet leaders' motto, Pipes contends, is "Beat others, and your own people will fear you." Irving Kristol agrees. The Communist Party has made Russia a superpower, and this "usurpation of national pride" means an internal "crisis can be indefinitely postponed." By contrast, "a Marxist-Leninist regime that actually declared its intention to live in peace with 'capitalist' powers would inflict a mortal wound on its own legitimacy." Jean-François Revel's language is stronger still: for the Soviets, "survival depends at every second on a plan for world domination, both as fantasm and as realpolitik."

Only conflict, then, keeps the Soviet system afloat. Retreat would sink it; even what Kristol calls "small defeats" would be fatal. This school of thought—call it "survival by expansion"—is not restricted to anti-Communist hardliners. Professor Seweryn Bialer sees "domestic pressure in Russia for national assertion"; fellow Sovietologist Jerry Hough predicts a tough foreign policy from Gorbachev, since Soviet "workers are more likely to accept sacrifices if they think that [these] are necessary to defend Russia from danger." Serious Soviet émigré scholars, such as Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, the authors of the best recent history of the Soviet Union, *Utopia in Power*, have drawn much the same conclusion.

Ironically, this view is identical to the radical left's critique of U.S. foreign policy in the '60s and '70s. Marxists argued then that America's large role in the world was the result not of ideology, advantage, or chance, but of systemic necessity. Only the cold war, they said, kept capitalism's creaky machinery going. Imperialism staved off upheaval by generating corporate profits and jingoistic sentiments. Revolutionaries focused their efforts on U.S. foreign policy, where a real change (perhaps a "small defeat" like Vietnam) might bring down the entire edifice. Now we are supposed to see the same weakness in the Soviet Union.

Hard facts on how decisions are made in the Kremlin are rare—no exposés in *Pravda*, no Freedom of Information Act, no televised hearings by the Supreme Soviet. Scholars can make a case for almost anything. But the new fluidity of Soviet politics is reason enough to look again at the arguments and the evidence. Who's right about how domestic conditions affect foreign policy—Gorbachev or the Western experts?

Certainly skeptical Western analysts can argue that the size and growth of the military budget under Brezhnev

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showed that foreign policy had priority over other goals. They can see in the leadership's appeals to Russian nationalism a need for confrontational diplomacy; in the continuing role of Leninist scripture, a need for progress toward "world revolution." If all this is true, Gorbachev will have little room to maneuver in foreign policy. And if the Soviet people are so easily rallied behind expansionism, democratization might make less difference in the East-West competition than Americans hope.

YET THE closer one looks, the less certain it seems that domestic politics requires a confrontational Soviet foreign policy. Take ideology. A Soviet leader charged with preserving the regime must pass the test of Leninist fidelity. (Gorbachev's feigned ignorance notwithstanding, it was Lenin who said foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy.) But even if he cannot discard official shibboleths, he need not be driven by them. Gorbachev himself recently complained that Soviet political thinking has stagnated for 50 years, and the updating he plans is a political, not an intellectual process: the theory will be revised to support his program. It is hard to see why it could not also support a foreign policy of accommodation and limited goals. Such revisions might be reluctantly made, and robbed of an earlier élan, but could hardly be denounced as heretical. Stalin, after all, used the plainly nationalist idea "Socialism in One Country" to cement his power in the '20s and put Soviet security above any ideological commitment or international "duty." Stalin also formulated Bolshevism's all-purpose escape clause: "Under certain unfavorable circumstances, retreat is as appropriate a form of struggle as advance."

Since then, Soviet power has grown dramatically, but Soviet leaders still devise ideological formulas to fudge old commitments and dodge unwanted confrontations. In 1983 Yuri Andropov chose the purest Marxist terms to legitimize his doubts about helping would-be socialist economies in the Third World. Progress toward socialism, he declared, depends on whether these regimes met the scientific preconditions of high social and material development—i.e., few of them would make the grade. At the 1986 Party Congress, Gorbachev invoked Lenin's criticism of Trotsky in ruling out the use of "revolutionary war" as a tool of either foreign policy or social progress. And last July he praised China's liberal economic policies—a gesture that, despite its geopolitical logic, forced the Soviet Union to eat ideological crow.

The flexibility—insipidity, almost—of Soviet ideology has led some analysts to see "Russian nationalism" as a popular substitute for Leninism. Unquestionably, Russia's past marks her as one of the world's truly xenophobic nations. (Virtually any work of Russian history has some story in which a foreigner is "seized by a mob on a Moscow street and burned alive.") Dislike of the outside world still has a place in Soviet popular consciousness today. Yet Gorbachev can hardly believe that the only way to exploit such feelings is by stimulating international tension. Even more than ideology, nationalism can readily be shaped to serve the purposes of a moderate foreign policy. Xenophobia justifies imperialism and isolationism alike. In 19th-century America, nationalism clearly meant shunning the outside world. In Russian eyes many nations, hostile or otherwise unworthy, deserve to be kicked around. But this belligerent impulse is always balanced by a different one: few nations, not even Soviet clients, merit much help. That's why what Pipes calls "constantly expanding the Communist realm" may not build nationalist legitimacy at all. Clients can mean burdens. (The man in the street is not alone in this view. A former secretary of state recalls Mrs. Gromyko's bitter Sinophobic diatribe over dinner.)

Russian nationalism can push outward or inward, and Soviet leaders, although free to exploit either impulse, have always shown great respect for the latter. Despite economic stringency and ideological qualifications, they continue material support for Third World clients acquired in the '70s. Yet they are often shy to advertise the effort at home. To take one small example, when a Soviet delegation visited Cuba last April, the Cuban media bragged of a 50 percent increase in Soviet aid over the prior Five Year Plan; the Soviet media mentioned no increase at all. Soviet "war-scare" propaganda shows the same pattern. In the early '80s Moscow's campaign to intimidate the West centered on the claim that the danger of nuclear war was rising. Andropov—under whom the campaign reached a peak—hoped to alarm American allies about where support for the Reagan administration might lead, and he seemed to see advantages in a siege mentality at home too. Yet at the same time he began to downplay Soviet commitments to Third World allies. With the war danger said to be rising, did he fear to trumpet ties that might draw Soviet forces into actual confrontations? If so, his hesitation marks a major boundary of popular nationalism. It means some Soviet alliances are seen as entangling, not legitimizing. Patriotism stirs when the Soviet homeland is threatened. Distant causes rouse it only distantly.

POLLING DATA suggest that adventures close to home don't bolster domestic legitimacy much either. Since 1984 Radio Liberty has interviewed almost 5,000 Soviet travelers on business trips in the West. The growing polarization of opinion on the Afghan war—one-third for, one-third against, one-third non-committal—is striking in a privileged group. Many of those surveyed dismissed the idea that the Red Army invaded to "help" the Afghans, but even some who believe this find the war's burden too great. One complaint: "The Soviet Union gives too much aid to other countries to the detriment of our population." And another: "Because of events in Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been drained dry of consumer goods." This is nationalism that looks inward.

Seen this way, nationalist sentiment not only provides strong support for modest policies but may actually check ambitious enterprises. Those who pursue confrontational

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policies may risk, rather than reinforce, their popular base. This is the domestic side of Gorbachev's "smile diplomacy" and his steady stream of new initiatives. He seems to believe that a foreign policy of extremely low tension increases his prestige at home.

From the vantage point of ideology or nationalism, then, the domestic returns of Soviet expansion look marginal, maybe negative. One can, of course, make too much of this: the Soviet people don't make foreign policy, the Politburo does. And many experts now believe that Gorbachev's colleagues feel that he's gone too far too fast on domestic issues, and that they will rein him in. But even to guess how this vulnerability might affect Soviet foreign policy we need to ask which policies landed new general secretaries in trouble in the past, and how trade-offs between domestic and foreign policy—particularly disagreements over spending—were resolved. The answers say a lot about what Gorbachev can and can't do.

Soviet economic problems have become so severe in part because of the Brezhnev gamble of the mid-'70s: that growth in industrial investment could be cut without paying a price in lower output. Greater efficiency (which never materialized) was to make this feat possible. Defenders of the decision said it would allow for fuller satisfaction of consumer tastes, such as the demand for meat. Military outlays also slowed. The CIA believes that in the early 1980s procurement of military equipment did not grow.

In short, the Soviet leadership mortgaged future growth, not current welfare. Guns didn't cut into butter as much as they both cut into economic rationality. Whatever else this trade-off implies, Soviet global power was not expected to purchase domestic legitimacy and social peace. The latter had to be bought separately, and Soviet leaders said explicitly how they expected to do so: higher living standards. At the 26th Party Congress in 1981, Brezhnev urged the defense industry to use its "strong scientific base" to aid lagging domestic sectors. He and then-Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov regularly toasted the so-called "Food Program" of agricultural investment for its national security benefits. Brezhnev sounded this theme even in his last public address, to an assembly of army marshals—a group unlikely to believe that military objectives could be achieved through farm spending.

TODAY BREZHNEV has been repudiated. Gorbachev says his policies attempted to "go forward without changing anything"—a Soviet free lunch. Gorbachev's plans call for restoring the Soviet industrial plant through higher investment, but consumption's high priority remains intact. Over the rest of the century, it is supposed to grow faster than the economy as a whole. Again and again Gorbachev has said that the country's most acute problems are food and housing; his most significant innovations to date aim to improve consumer services.

If this is how Gorbachev sees resource priorities, it is no surprise that support for foreign policy spending has become more guarded. He recently offered reasons, for example, to minimize military budget increases. He claimed to see a Western attempt to lure the Soviets into wasteful spending but insisted that the trick would fail: "We shall not make a single step in excess of the demands and requirements of sensible, sufficient defense." As for aid to Soviet clients, its constituency has weakened since 1981, when Brezhnev declared that "when our friends need urgent help . . . the Soviet people understand and approve" of giving it to them. His successor, Andropov, grumbled in 1983 that the Soviets would help others "to the extent of our ability." And at the Party Congress last year, Gorbachev failed to mention such aid at all. In fact, those who object to the priority of domestic consumption can be punished. During a sleepy year in power (1984-85), the sole change Konstantin Chernenko made in the top leadership was to fire the chief of the general staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, who crossed his superiors by pressing publicly for more defense spending.

GORBACHEV'S JOB in meshing foreign policy and domestic politics goes beyond resource allocation, of course. It is widely said, as it was of all his predecessors, that he can't pursue accommodation with the West because of pressure from political rivals. As a new leader, he allegedly has strong incentives to adopt policies of tension and conflict, the better to fend off internal challenges. But here too, history seems to point the other way. Although no moment strained the Soviet leadership more severely than Stalin's death in March 1953, his successors' anxiety about maintaining control hardly meant adventure abroad. Instead, they sought an early end to the Korean War to deflect the tough-talking new Eisenhower administration. In fact, both the immediate post-Stalin and post-Khrushchev collective leaderships pursued very unambitious foreign policies. Only when a single leader—Khrushchev the first time, Brezhnev the second—had emerged above the rest, and Politburo infighting sharply subsided, did policies toward the West become more daring and challenging. At all times sitting general secretaries have appeared to enjoy great latitude in foreign policy. Factional challenges have been mounted against the foreign policies of incumbent leaders but not one has succeeded, even after major Soviet reverses. The one possible exception—Khrushchev's fall two years after the Cuban missile crisis—was decided by domestic issues. And no leader has paid any political price at all for the worst Soviet setback since World War II: the break with China.

Whether we take resources or nationalism or ideology or Politburo rivalries as our measure, Soviet leaders do not appear to believe that confrontational or expansionist foreign policies exert such a unique grip on the people's loyalty that they cannot back away from them. Soviet ideology is messianic but always self-serving. Soviet diplomacy's crude, menacing nationalism can be translated into inward-looking indifference—unattractive, perhaps, but safer for us. The Soviet drive for military superiority has not been immune to other strong claims on re-

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sources. And while some Soviet leaders have manipulated foreign tensions for domestic aims, no iron law is at work. Other leaders—even Lenin—built their programs around the benefits of international relaxation.

THERE REMAIN, of course, crucial links between the nature of the Soviet regime and its dealings with the outside world. As a still-closed society, the Soviet Union does not easily establish relations of trust with others. As a command economy with autarkic goals, it has some trouble even with everyday commercial ties. A revolutionary tradition makes it the presumptive (if not always reliable) friend of leftist gunmen everywhere. And having cast six Eastern European regimes in its image, the Soviet Union treats challenges to Communist rule in any of them as a threat to its own internal order.

These connections make the Soviet Union inflexible and difficult to deal with. They keep it from being a "normal" international actor. But to say the Politburo leaders are driven to foreign adventure so as to pacify the home front is, in effect, to blame the Soviet people while obscuring who's really in charge. In this strange analytic reversal Soviet domestic discontent is seen as a near-permanent Western liability, not as an asset. And the Soviet leadership is seen as incapable of defining Soviet external interests differently. Oddly, the same Western analysts who insist that totalitarian states have a crucial edge in foreign policy have now concluded that such regimes are decisively dependent on public opinion. The Soviet system can't preserve itself against a loss of popular support? Are we all talking about the same country?

In truth, the Politburo leaders face few domestic obstacles to accommodation with the West. A wider range of Soviet security strategies than we have seen in the last 20 years is thus both sustainable and politically legitimate. The range of likely policies is not wide enough for Western comfort, and it may never become so. But if not, the reasons will lie in the leadership's strategic choices, not in internal dilemmas beyond their control. If the Soviets challenge the West, it is because they choose to, and have been able to get away with it, not because they have to.

Soviet policy is not driven by internal necessity, so it can change. But because it is driven by power, interest, and conviction, it will not change easily. The men of the Politburo will not, just because they are free to do so, lightly reconsider the strategies that have so enlarged their role in world affairs. In the next half decade Soviet military spending may grow at four percent (as in the early and middle '70s), at two percent (the rate since then), or not at all. Whatever the pace, Soviet power will be formidable; and the West, especially the United States, will have to contend with it. Some internal changes proposed by Gorbachev—such as an economic overhaul or his wooing of the reformist intelligentsia—may even help sustain a confrontational foreign policy. If his reforms succeed, he will enlarge the Soviet resource pie and strengthen his domestic legitimacy. On this basis, he will be freer to conduct any foreign policy he wants, however unpopular.

To colleagues who challenge his approach Gorbachev may well answer that his unorthodox means serve the traditional ends of Soviet power politics. In the West it has become common to speak of him in the same terms, to see him "winning" the East-West competition. Yet as we puzzle over Soviet policy, it is well to recall again the fate of the radical left's critique of U.S. "imperialism," which considered retrenchment impossible. The American system proved far more resilient than critics foresaw. Retreat did not inflame radical passions; it extinguished them. Nixon and Kissinger's foreign policy of retrenchment satisfied a domestic desire for less global involvement and reconciliation with adversaries. They aimed at the same time to boost domestic confidence and morale through surprise initiatives and razzle-dazzle improvisation. But containing the international impact of defeat in Vietnam was more difficult. Bold strokes did not quite cover the fact of American decline.

There is a lesson here for Gorbachev, who seems to be betting on a formula much like Nixon's: successive initiatives that create the appearance of a peaceful negotiating process and counter (or at least conceal) a weaker position in the global power balance. The "soft" themes of this strategy—Gorbachev as the man who exorcises the war specter of the early '80s—should be effective domestically. But success at home does not guarantee success in the harder task of enhancing Soviet international effectiveness. The Soviets believe concessions encourage an adversary to raise new demands. And believing that foreign policy has not gone well for them in this decade, they are now even more likely to worry about seeming weak.

GORBACHEV'S DILEMMA—how to meet conflicting foreign and domestic goals—may sometimes lead him (as it did Nixon) to schizophrenic policies. While responding to popular desires for "peace," he may rely in practice on traditional, tough methods abroad. His phony "partial withdrawal" from Afghanistan last fall is one example of how these disparate policy lines can be joined. Because the Soviets made no effort to conceal their ruse from international monitoring, only the Soviet people were in the end likely to believe any of their boys were coming home. Meanwhile, the bombing of Pakistan increased.

Gorbachev has combined hard and soft policies ingeniously. But it will over time become harder to pursue accommodation consistently *and* protect Soviet power and perquisites. To choose between tranquility and toughness may mean paying a price that Gorbachev and his colleagues are not ready to accept. Their dealings with us and with others will not be burdened by worry about how to pacify "the people," but will be shaped by their own ambitions—which we cannot fully measure—for an international role. How they choose will be the true test of what the Russians—the Russians who count—really want. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Truth and Inconsequences

A nice coincidence. In 1969 *Here's Your Life* opened here, the lovely first film by the Swedish director Jan Troell, which was the story of a boy's life from 14 to 18. The boy was played by Eddie Axberg. Now there's a differently lovely Swedish film about a boy, a 12-year-old this time, called *My Life as a Dog*. The chief sound engineer is Eddie Axberg.

My Life as a Dog
(Skouras)

Gardens of Stone
(Tri-Star)

This is the sixth film by Lasse Hallström but the first to have theatrical release here. A novel by Reider Jönsson is the source of the screenplay, which Jönsson wrote with Hallström and Brasse Brännstrom. The resulting picture joins the ranks of distinguished films about children, Duvivier's *Poil de Carotte*, Benoit-Levy's *La Maternelle*, Grede's *Hugo and Josefin*, Ritt's *Conrack* among them. The particular insight in *My Life as a Dog* about children—at least around this boy's age—is that, no matter how deeply they feel, they tend to hide or disguise their feelings. For instance, when this boy's beloved mother is being taken out of the house to an ambulance and to her almost certain death, he sits under a table as she is carried by and whistles. Throughout, the boy's scrapes, troubles, gaffes, sillinesses, and jokes are his secret code for his hurts and loves and hopes. Only two or three times are emotions expressed directly: the rest is cipher, delicate and true.

Hallström insured his film with the casting of the boy. Anton Glanzelius has exactly the right urchin face—at least we find out it's exactly right—to mislead grown-ups into thinking he's a mere mischief-maker, and also to be a transparent mask for the tumults inside him, which he creates movingly. Another child, Melinda Kinnaman, is excellent as a tomboy who becomes his pal, then his adorer. Adults are of course easier to cast and direct, but that's small reason to slight Anki Liden, as the boy's desperate tubercular mother, or Tomas von Brömssen, as her brother, a funny-looking, warmhearted uncle to the boy.

It's the 1950s. Glanzelius and his dog and his older brother live with their ailing mother in a city apartment. (The father, mysteriously described as loading bananas down on the equator, never appears.) To let their mother rest, Glanzelius—without his dog—is sent to his uncle and aunt in a village where the uncle works in a glass factory. (His brother is sent elsewhere.) This is where he meets the tomboy and a marvelous collection of village eccentrics. At the end of summer he returns home; soon after, his mother goes into hospital and dies. This time, again without his dog, he is sent permanently to his uncle and aunt, arriving in a dramatically different snowbound village, and goes to school there. Some time later, after repeatedly asking when his dog will join him, he is told that his dog has died too—and he knows that this means it was put away. His reaction is to grin—*grin*—and to go around barking and attempting to bite people's legs: until he breaks down and cries, and ultimately adjusts to the two deaths. On his scale the dog's death is not much less important than his mother's.

The incidents of the story, all of them interesting, some of them full of cranky, small-town good feeling, are not really the foreground of the piece. Character is—the boy's and everyone else's in the film. Few of the characters are strikingly original; all of them are realized and affecting.

Hallström has devised an apt punctuation-linkage for his film. At the end of most episodes, especially those in which the boy has goofed off or gotten into trouble, the camera moves in on a starry sky as we hear the boy speak about disasters he has read of and how he is better off even after what has happened to him. The recurrent comparison he makes is with Laika, the dog that the Soviets sent into space with insufficient food. That story scored the boy's mind and makes him capable of compassion even when he is distressed.

One incident, photographed in golden light, runs through the film like a refrain. The boy keeps remembering a moment with his mother at a lake when he did a backflip and made her laugh. How he treasures that laugh.

Hallström's film defines yet again the difference between sentiment and sentimentality. It never remotely approaches the latter. It is much too funny and melancholy.

Francis Coppola continues his sad way. His talent doesn't diminish (although it doesn't grow): he just keeps grasping desperately for chances to use it in an increasingly tough film world. He bounces from subject to subject, discernibly searching not for variety but for success. A Hollywood story editor I know went recently to see another director who started big around the same time as Coppola did, then hit a slide. Arrived at the director's estate, my friend found a Mexican gardener in front and asked him where Mr. So-and-so was. "Out in the back," said the gardener. As my friend started toward the back, the gardener called after him, "He needs a hit." Coppo-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Prick Up Your Ears. The wry, ultimately grim life of the English playwright Joe Orton. Exceptional writing, directing, and acting. Memorable. (Reviewed 4/20/87)

Rosa Luxemburg. Margarethe von Trotta's intelligent, talented investigation of a radical career. Barbara Sukowa strong as Luxemburg. Finally unsatisfactory, still utterly fascinating. (5/18/87)

The Secret of My Success. Kansas City youth comes to Big Apple and takes a big bite of big business. Entertainingly flimsy, with bright dialogue and filmmaking. (5/11/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Spalding Gray's one-man show about his role in *The Killing Fields*. Amusing, enlightening, obliquely moving. Sagely directed by Jonathan Demme. (3/23/87)

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la's previous picture, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, may have been a success—I don't know—but it and his latest are the work of a man who needs hits, not of a man doing what he really wants to do. There's no need to indict Coppola for the current conditions of American filmmaking; neither is there any reason to see *Gardens of Stone* as anything other than what it is.

It's a genre picture, one more in a line of U.S. armed forces movies, dressed up with a new setting and a decor of discussion. The picture begins in 1968 at Fort Myer, Virginia; the focus is the training and duty of the Old Guard that accompanies military funerals at Arlington Cemetery. (Hence the title.) The script by Ronald Bass, adapted from a novel by Nicholas Proffitt, is a collection of platitudes: centrally, the young soldier who comes under the command of a sergeant who was his father's Army buddy. The young man is in love with a colonel's daughter. Also, there's a hulking sergeant-major who is tough on his men but really loves them. Also, the sergeant is divorced and lonely. Talk about Vietnam provides the contemporary glitzing-up of all these stock elements. The sergeant has doubts about the war ("Nothing to win. And no way to win it") yet insists on duty. He cozies up with a *Washington Post* woman reporter who is against the war. (Try to believe that match from either side.) The worst scene in the picture is a trumped-up quarrel at a party between a peacenik lawyer and the sergeant, in which the latter breaks the former's jaw—and is forgiven!

The sergeant is played by James Caan, who was at his best in *The Godfather* for Coppola and, absent for a few years, now looks much older, full of jaw-clenchings and tears-blinked-back moments. The sergeant-major is James Earl Jones, monstrously fat but weighty in other ways, too. Anjelica Huston, appealingly odd, is the *Post* reporter. The young soldier and his sweetheart are played by two nonentities named D. B. Sweeney and Mary Stuart Masterson.

Through all this farrago of stuff retrieved from Wallace Beery and Victor McLaglen, here seasoned with mod spices, Coppola moves with more than fluency—with an eye refreshingly acute from first shot to last. It's hard to see that he has developed a style, or even styles: he hops from style to style as he finds scripts for which he can get financing. But certainly he is deft. What we're left with, after the deftness, is a clanking army-life flick updated with Vietnam talk, made just eight years after Coppola made the hyperbolic but seriously intended *Apocalypse Now*.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

A Tribute to Robert Penn Warren

Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*, like the novels of Thomas Wolfe, is a work that made a powerful impression on members of my generation when we were young. Unlike Wolfe's adolescent whimperings, however, Warren's book managed to maintain its hold on us through the decades. Now, 40 years later, Adrian Hall is paying homage to its author with a faithful dramatic adaptation at the Trinity Repertory Company in Providence. *All the King's Men* is written in that terse, punchy style originally patented by Hemingway before being expropriated by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler as the hard-boiled idiom of Sam Spade and Phillip Marlowe. It is a style that, reinforced by a strong narrative, makes highly readable an essentially intellectual historical novel. But along with its literary momentum, *All the King's Men* possesses a lyric, elegiac quality that signals the presence of an inspired poet collaborating with a brilliant social philosopher to act as nostalgic witness to the lost promise of America. Warren's writing is permeated with a deep mournfulness, a pervasive sense of grief, that begins in the political realm and then grows metaphysical. He clearly set out to write an American tragedy, and in Willie Stark—his fictional version of the Louisiana demagogue Huey Long—he succeeded in creating a genuinely tragic hero.

The conscience of the book, however (also the author's spokesman), is the narrator, Jack Burden. Both a victim of the tragedy and its chief interpreter, Burden is arguably as important a figure in the book as Stark: "The story of Wil-

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Friday, May 15, 1987, 9:30 a.m. (prompt)-5:00 p.m.
Tishman Auditorium, Vanderbilt Hall
40 Washington Square South
New York City

Plenary Session: C. Jay Oliva, Chancellor, NYU; John Brademas, President, NYU; Elisabeth Janeway, Chair, NYU

10:00 a.m. AMERICA AND THE WORLD

Moderator: Denis Donoghue, Co-Chair, NYU Humanities Council

Panelists: Leslie Gelb, *The New York Times*; Stanley Hoffmann, Harvard University; Stephen Cohen, Princeton University; Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate 1986

2:30 p.m. THE INDIVIDUAL IN AMERICA

Introduction: Catharine R. Stimpson, Rutgers University

Moderator: Peggy Davis, NYU School of Law

Panelists: Sheldon Wolin, Princeton University; Nell Painter, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Rhonda Copelon, CUNY Law School; Lawrence Sager, NYU School of Law

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lie Stark and the story of Jack Burden," writes Warren, "are, in one sense, one story." Nevertheless, Burden has played a curiously subordinate part in previous dramatizations, including the one Warren wrote himself—an early play version that subsequently served as inspiration for the novel. In the movie, Burden was played by John Ireland, a hulking actor of no intellectual weight, who lurked around the office more like one of Stark's bodyguards than like his chief political adviser and future chronicler. Burden is not just a smart reporter enticed into Willie's entourage by the promise of power. He is also a former doctoral candidate in American history, the author of a scholarly monograph (on Cass Mastern, a 19th-century Southern aristocrat), which occupies a long, discursive chapter in the book. Hall included this section in an earlier version of the play produced in Dallas, but it made the evening extremely long. In Providence, the play runs three hours without it. Nevertheless, even without this digression, the Trinity production is the first to give Burden the emphasis he deserves by moving him from the outskirts to the center of the action.

HALL IS a director who works extremely well with novelists. Indeed, though eminently theatrical, his epic style is probably more congenial to narratives than to dramas. So are the talents of his designer, Eugene Lee, who has devised for the production a sprawling, fluid set that keeps the action in continual motion. Seated on both sides of the stage—the flexible Trinity theater has been rearranged as an arena—the audience alternates between observer and participant. On one side, Lee has built a weather-beaten shack festooned with '30s signs and logos, on the other an official stone building that doubles as courthouse and Burden's mansion. The rest is abstract space—decorated with ice cream chairs, pool tables, Casablanca fans, bunting, and office furniture—where most of the action takes place, to the accompaniment of rousing songs by Randy Newman.

This action includes virtually all the central episodes of the book, both Stark's history and Burden's, moving nonsequentially through time from Willie's pinnacle as The Boss, back to his humble beginnings as a redneck idealist, and then forward again to the creation of his proudest achievement, the Willie Stark Hospital. Paralleling the story of Willie's gradual corruption—signaled not only by his power lust but by sexual betrayals, first of his schoolteacher wife, and then of his pockmarked mistress, Sadie Burke—is the story of Burden's moral deterioration, which culminates in his exposure of the seemingly incorruptible Judge Irwin. Willie, with his primitive instinct about human fallibility, needs to know Irwin's weakness so as to insure his endorsement or neutrality. Using his research talents, Jack finds it: the judge has risen to eminence through bribery and the suicide of the man he displaced. This knowledge leads in turn to Irwin's suicide and to the revelation that the judge is actually Jack's own father. After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Jack's penance is to withdraw from the world, to marry Anne Stanton, to finish the story of Cass Mastern, and, presumably, to chronicle the history of Willie Stark. Only then will he prepare—in the lovely concluding words of the book—to "go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time."

Stark's history is even more convulsive, the unfinished story of a man who might have made a difference—a man who had the brains, the imagination, and the power, but not, alas, the character to realize his dreams. Beginning as a cornfed dupe of ruthless politicians before developing his own brilliant political instinct, Willie has a genuine desire to become the savior of his redneck class by wresting the reins of government from the "high-minded men in knee breeches and silver buckles" who run the world. But as his power becomes more absolute so do his lust and ambition, and it is not long before his principles are engulfed by political expediency and sexual athleticism. Only when his son is paralyzed in a football accident does he resolve to reaffirm his marriage vows and social idealism. But before he can exercise his new resolution, he is gunned down on the courthouse steps by Anne's brother, Adam, one of those "high-minded men" he has displaced. "It might have been different," says the dying Willie, and both Burden and the author are half-inclined to believe him.

Hall's production sketches these episodes through direct address to the audience, rowdy barbecues, mass rallies, and costume balls, in a cinematic style that includes actual film footage (the director's debt to Federal Theater and Living Newspaper techniques is tangible). In one of the strongest moments of the evening, a crude screen is lowered from overhead to show Willie—exhorting his followers against the background of a flaming torch—announcing his determination to smite his enemies, hip and thigh, "with a meat ax." Actors bring on the props and furniture, Willie his bed, Judge Irwin his own coffin, and scenes are concluded with boisterous choruses of hymns and political songs.

THERE ARE weaknesses in this production, some of them in the acting. The two Stantons are badly performed and, more seriously, the central part of Burden, as played by Peter MacNicol, is miscast. MacNicol was young Stingo in the movie *Sophie's Choice* and he still seems a teenage Southern innocent. His youthful ebullience makes the character seem somewhat callow when what Burden needs is maturity, irony, and intellect. (MacNicol has his moments, however, particularly when exposing Burden's corruption and self-loathing, his mouth twisted into a kind of palsied grimace.) Furthermore, the adaptation moves too fast to capture the mournful, legato rhythms of Warren's writing. By including so much, the evening loses shape, sacrificing focus and concentration. As of now, there seem to be at least five or six endings, and this exhausts the play of emotional power. Still, there are fine performances: Peter Gerety as Willie, with his shrewd eyes and barrel-chested strut; Richard Kneeland as the noble Judge Irwin, a white-headed stoic speaking in resonant cadences; Barbara Orson as Burden's oft-married mother, screaming, "You did it. You killed him. Your father" as an off-the-hook phone beeps its loud protest; Becca Lish as a lisping debutante; and above all, Candy Buckley as Sadie Burke.

Buckley is a handsome, redheaded dynamo from Texas who, on the basis of this one performance, establishes herself as a major actress. Possessed of a strong singing voice all the more potent because of her capacity to *act* her songs, she plays Sadie as a kind of female Mack the Knife, a sleek, sizzling street broad fresh from the jungle. Crouched to spring, her jaws snapping in fury and defiance, she shows a set of teeth that could be the fangs of a puma. The character is dangerous, clearly a worthy mate for Willie Stark, and credibly vindictive enough to cause his death. Buckley is an actress willing to take risks—risks that can be unsettling to those who prefer a more decorous theater, but highly appropriate for the big female roles: Medea, Lady

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Macbeth, Anna Christie. She brings high voltage to a production that sometimes tends to run on alternating currents. I eagerly await her next electrifying performance.

But the evening really belongs to Red Warren. It is his ringing language that fills the stage in Providence, his historical imagination that shapes the contours of the action. Our greatest living poet, he has presented us not only with some of the finest verse in English, but with extraordinary fiction of which this novel is the crowning achievement. *All the King's Men* has weathered the decades like its author's craggy eagle features—still displaying, after 40 years, the same wisdom and beauty and tough-minded decency. It was probably an impossible task to put this huge canvas of a novel on the stage, but we owe a debt of gratitude to the Trinity and to Adrian Hall for thus paying tribute to one of America's most gifted and beloved artists.

POST-HISTORY ON PARADE

The State of the Art
by Arthur C. Danto

(Prentice-Hall, 240 pp., $19.95)

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art
by Arthur C. Danto

(Harvard University Press, 288 pp., $17.50, $6.95 paper)

The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art
by Arthur C. Danto

(Columbia University Press, 216 pp., $25)

In 1964 Arthur Danto and a painter friend were at the Stable Gallery in New York, having an experience that would prove talismanic, for one of them at least. The gallery, piled high with stacks of Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, became the site of a sudden recognition for Danto. There he saw that art, in a momentous whoosh of *Aufhebung*, in an exalting rush of transcendence, had, transforming itself into philosophy, come to an end.

Danto explains this transmutation from the world of the artistic into the domain of the philosophical at many different junctures in his three recent books of art criticism and aesthetic theory. He makes clear that what was at issue in this instance was the *form* in which the series of *Brillo Boxes* could be seen to be raising the age-old question about the essence of art. Of course, modernist art has, throughout the century, contorted itself into a variety of positions and shapes through which to broach the question of its very nature; this is by now a commonplace of the history, theory, criticism of that art. Paintings, for example, have tendered such definitions through their own condition as flat, or as manifestly painted, or as exclusively addressed to vision.

Still, such paintings, by exemplifying a given notion of essence, have maintained themselves on a level of discourse that never leaves the pictorial form of either question or reply. But "Pop Art put the question differently," Danto tells us, "and in its true philosophical form: Why is this art, it asked, when something just like this—an ordinary Brillo box, a commonplace soup can—is not, especially when the artwork and the real thing so exactly resemble each other as not to be told apart?" It was, then, from within this experience of series—this serial repetition of the identical, the potentially endless parade of what Danto elsewhere calls "indiscernibilia"—that a revelation came. Its subject was the true knowledge that can arise when conceptual difference can be generated by the very morphological sameness that makes something a series. "Art had raised, from within and in its definitive form, the question of the philosophical nature of art." And when that happens of course, the whoosh you hear is from the wingbeats of a very special owl, as philosophy acts to replace (Danto's term is "disenfranchize") art as the form in which knowledge comes to know itself.

Throughout these books, Danto is forthright about the ambition of his argument. As a philosopher, he is concerned that his demonstration carry the weight of necessity. "Though one must resist the temptation," he writes, "to identify that which may have awakened one from one's own dogmatic slumber with that which may have awakened history from *its* dogmatic slumber, I cannot refrain from supposing that I grasped what art was asking about itself at that moment in 1964." And further, Danto emphasizes, not only was his conclusion about the meaning of the readymade the necessary conclusion to draw, but that experience raised the philosophical question in its necessary form, too. "All questions in philosophy," Danto writes at the end of *The State of the Art*, "have the same form: They ask why two things of an outwardly similar appearance should belong to deeply distinct philosophical kinds."

Yet Danto's reader might demur. For the experience of a series, the "truth" that is enfolded within the serial form, waiting as it were to reveal itself, has been understood, historically, in vastly different ways. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, stages just such a revelation in his novel *Nausea*, as he maneuvers his hero, philosophically sick to his stomach, into place before the spectacle of nature's teeming self-duplication, its repulsive replication of the same. Yet here the realization of seriality does not pose the question "What *is* such-and-such?" Rather, it provokes an experience of contingency, of the non-necessity of existence, which is suddenly viewed as mere repetition. This revelation is both the climax and the ending of *Nausea*, as Sartre's hero flees from the world of the repeatable and the replaceable, and decides to engage with that very type of immutability and uniqueness that he (and his author) understands by the concept "art."

And there is an additional "truth" that has been extracted from the experience of series. Two years before the publication of *Nausea*, Walter Benjamin produced yet another reflection on the lessons of seriality, in his essay "The Work

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of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Standing behind this reflection was neither analytic philosophy, as in the case of Danto, nor phenomenology, as in the case of Sartre. Instead it was historical materialism that prompted Benjamin to locate the work of art in relation to its "mode of production" and thus to examine the issue of series from within the context of the Industrial Revolution, the assembly line, the rise of the commodity, and the forms of consumption. The onset of photography, as the technological Other of everything individually wrought or crafted by hand, had come to create an enormous rupture within art's history. In Benjamin's view, photography could not but utterly transform both the meaning of art and its use. This was because it was creating, it had already created, the form of the multiple without an original.

Consider again Danto's watershed experience of the Warhol *Brillo Boxes*. It turns out that there are questions about the readymade other than the question that Danto insists is the philosophically necessary one. Benjamin, for example, would never ask what this phenomenon of "indiscernibilia" shows about the ontological condition of the work of art finally brought to the point of reflecting upon its own essence. This is because, he would insist, art has no essence apart from the specific circumstances of its making. Thus mechanical reproduction has come to change, historically, the conditions of the work of art: to relocate the status of the original; to alter the conception of agency we attach to the idea of the author; to blur the boundaries of where the work begins and everything else ends; and so on. Mechanical reproduction has not transmuted the work of art into philosophy; it has organized the work into a relationship—either critical or servile—to the processes of commodification.

It is only by having no connection whatever to this history (Benjamin's name is not mentioned once within the course of three books for which the readymade form—Duchamp's urinals and Warhol's boxes—amounts to something of an obsession)—that is, the history of the mechanically reproduced object—that Danto's own art criticism is at such a loss to make sense of the decade of the 1970s. That criticism, written over the last several years and published in the *Nation*, has been collected in *The State of the Art*. It is based on the assumption that art came to an end in 1964. The decade of the 1970s did nothing, Danto asserts, but repeat that ending with increasingly trivial variations, giving rise to the wholly permissive atmosphere of aesthetic pluralism, to a wild cacophony of conflicting styles and manners. And the 1980s similarly did nothing to change this condition of drift except, Danto argues, at the very surface. For what has transpired in this decade only represents a commercially motivated attempt to resurrect the old notion of a dominant style; its vaunted neoexpressionism is but a shallow imitation, a simulacrum, of the real thing. Nothing, Danto insists, has happened, or could happen, now that art is over.

AS ONE READS, in *The State of the Art*, the various scenarios of the contacts that have taken place between Danto and the work of contemporary artists, Baudelaire's dictum that "criticism should be partial, passionate, and political" always seems to hover above the texts, a counterexample of Danto's tone of languid irony. Danto's handling of Julian Schnabel, urbanely condescending—"It is difficult to imagine a more amiable show; the paintings are so anxious to please that it is as though they are wagging their tails"—but at the same time politically savvy—"To understand the phenomenon of hotness [Schnabel is the prime instance for Danto of the Hot Artist], one must understand something of the extraordinary transformations in the concept of patronage that define the economics of art in the late 20th century"—constantly telegraphs to its reader that ours is a period in which nothing (nothing aesthetic) is at stake.

The passionate and the political, with their vocabulary of "should" and "ought," with their Stendhalian notion that "painting is nothing but a construction in ethics!" are simply out of place in Danto's relentlessly detached space of the "post-historical." For what could provide the leverage for either passion or conviction, except the experience of the present and its culture as mattering historically?

The one instance of something's seeming to matter to Danto—matter in the sense of bother, worry, perturb—is Richard Serra's massive work of public sculpture, *Tilted Arc*. This is a work that is mentioned more frequently within the pages of Danto's collection of criticism than any other (including anything by Duchamp or Warhol) and graces the cover of a book whose name seems to refer at one and the same time to art's present condition and its relation to public patronage. It is precisely the issue of public patronage that *Tilted Arc* seems to force for Danto, who expresses enthusiasm for the work: "*Tilted Arc* meets, and perhaps surpasses, current standards for good sculpture, and since it is exquisitely placed in relation to its formal environment, it does all one could ask according to what have seemed the only relevant indexes." Still, he insists that it should be removed from Federal Plaza in New York, for which it was commissioned by the federal government. Danto's reason for this is that the state should communicate its own benignancy to its citizens by "perlocutionarily conveying the crucial message that the will of the public matters and that ours is a responsive government."

This strange (not to say cynical) argument for art-by-referendum, which threads its way throughout the three essays Danto devotes to Richard Serra, is oddly in conflict with Danto's repeated bracketing of Serra's work within a world of aesthetic purity to which Serra himself, determined to engage in the world outside the museum, does not wish to belong. Danto has no trouble describing Serra's sculpture in terms of "the subtle shifts or gradations of metallic texture and coloration, which reflected here red, there blue, or displayed a shower of golden spots." But in aestheticizing this art of raw steel power, Danto admits that he is probably in a small minority of those who can even tell Serra's work apart from a bunch of Cor Ten plates left around rusting in a steelyard. But of course it is just this barrier—"the public cannot be supposed capable of such discriminations"—that links Serra's art to Danto's central philosophical problem, his "indiscernibilia." It may strike the reader, however, that this very difficulty might make a referendum on such a work of art, in this "post-historical" age, indistinguishable from a referendum on philosophy.

THUS IT turns out that once art has come to an end what is left for the critic to do is to explore the parameters of "post-historical" art, and to reflect on the endless fascination of art's philosophical moment—the coming into view of the "indiscernibilia." This Danto does by performing what he refers to as the *Gedankenexperiment*. These thought ex-

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periments, which are conducted with a certain frequency in the pages of Danto's work—particularly in the more philosophical *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* and *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*—are enabled by the readymade itself as the philosophical form of the work of art. They take the form of imagining the coming into being of an object that resembles a work of art in every way, except that we would all agree that the conditions of its emergence would deprive it of such an aesthetic designation. Imagine, for example, that a thousand sticks of dynamite were planted around a Carrara marble quarry. You push the plunger and BLAAM! When the dust settles the bits of marble have fallen into a heap that in every detail resembles Michelangelo's *Pietà* from St. Peter's in Rome. Now, could we imagine ourselves treating this pile of marble chips as a work of art?

There is a particular *Gedankenexperiment* mounted by Danto in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* that is uncannily pertinent:

> Imagine that we learned that the object before us, which looks like a painting that would spontaneously move us if we believed it had been painted—say the *Polish Rider* of Rembrandt, in which an isolated mounted figure is shown midjourney to an uncertain destiny—was not painted at all but is the result of someone's having dumped lots of paint in a centrifuge, giving the contrivance of a spin, and having the result splat onto canvas, "just to see what would happen." And what happened is that, by a kind of statistical miracle, the paint molecules disposed themselves in such a way as to produce something to all outward appearances exactly like one of the deepest paintings of one of the deepest artists in the history of the subject, a painting through which a person might define his life? Now the question is whether, knowing this fact, we are prepared to consider this randomly generated object a work of art.

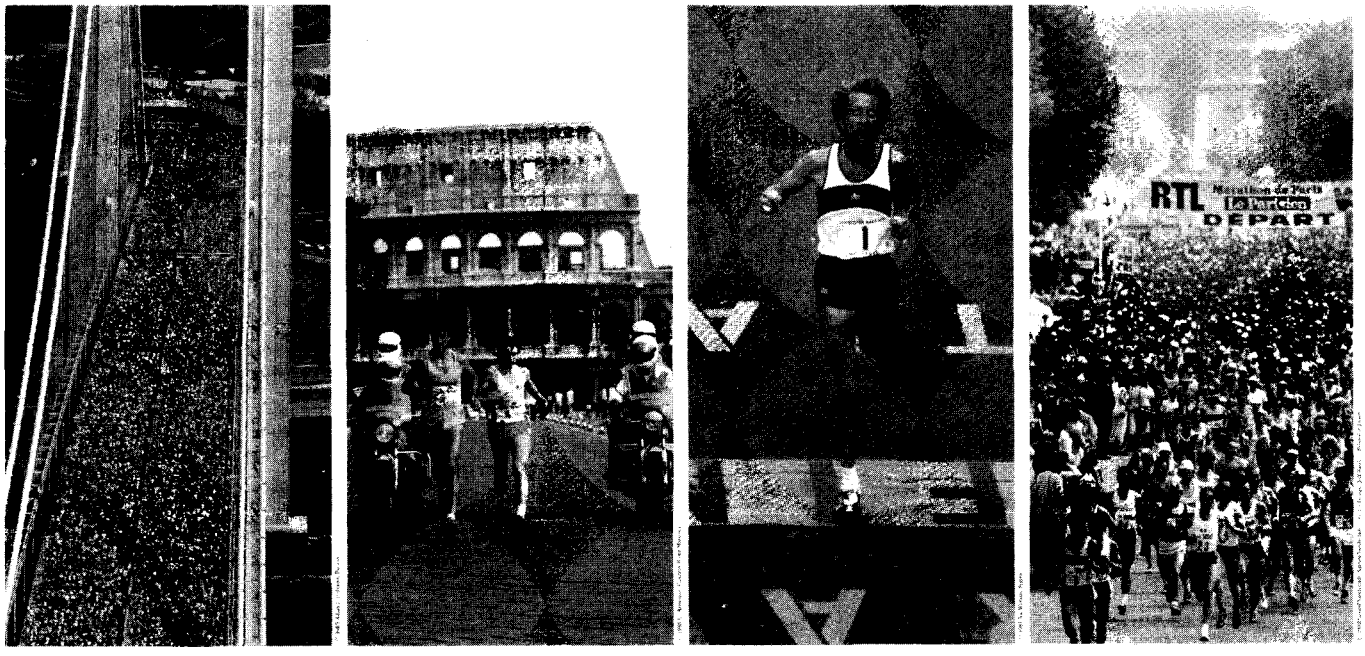
Like a good thought experiment, Danto's reflection on the *Polish Rider* brackets out the empirical world in order to get at the truth conditions of the concept through the imaginary event. But the reader, in 1987, must be startled in a very particular way. For at this very moment in Holland there is a collective project under way to establish the true, the authentic, the original Rembrandt from within the miasma of fakes, copies, shop pieces, student-produced look-alikes, and all the other forms of "indiscernibilia" that have clouded our view of the genuine article. And one of the paintings that has been struck from the list of real Rembrandts is, precisely, the *Polish Rider*.

The really interesting question, then, is not what we think about the giant splat produced by the centrifuge, but rather what lesson we draw from the possibility now being raised for our thought that this "deepest painting" may not be by "one of the deepest artists in the history of the subject." Do we shrug our shoulders and decide we were duped: "Oh, so it was not really a mov-

THE WORLD OF

MARATHONS

BY SANDY TREADWELL



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ing painting after all"? Or does this become an occasion—itself made possible by the pressures on our presuppositions about the "nature of art" exerted by the historical phenomenon of the photograph and its mechanical production—to rethink the structure of agency, of authorship? One of the things this would force us to reconsider is the question of the studio structure of the great masters, with their rafts of assistants and apprentices, and the collective nature of the work this implies. The idea of the unique hand of the master begins to appear within *this* thought exercise as a Romantic prejudice that has very little to do with the actual conditions of artistic practice. Even many of Rembrandt's *self*-portraits, we are now able to realize, were painted by his students. The perturbations this has caused in what we could term the conceptual field of "the original" (or the authentic, or, for that matter, the artistic member in a pair of "indiscernibilia") are very great indeed.

That is what has been happening in the art of the 1970s and '80s: the photograph has left its mark on all the structures of artistic production, reception, and conceptualization, with the consequence of much aesthetic and institutional upheaval. Far from being post-historical, this phenomenon is deeply historical. It is also deeply troubling. But it is a phenomenon that never enters either the field of the *Gedankenexperiment* or the pages of Danto's art criticism. For here is an art critic for whom art has simply entered "post-history." And there we stand untroubled, at the end of art, watching a mighty bird soar through the air. Whoosh.

ROSALIND KRAUSS

Rosalind Krauss is professor of art history at Hunter College and editor of *October* magazine.

THE VOYAGE OUT

The Collected Short Stories by Jean Rhys

(Norton, 372 pp., $19.95)

In the literary reference books the novelist Jean Rhys, who was rediscovered in her old age after decades of neglect, is classified as an English writer. This is, in a sense, true; but it is also profoundly wide of the mark. Rhys was a British subject and spent most of her adult life in England, where she died in 1979, at the age of 89. But she was born in a distant place, and England was for her, always and unremittingly, a cold land of exile where she could never feel at home.

In *Smile Please*, the unfinished autobiography she wrote toward the end of her life, Rhys remembered with a shudder how in England "I learned to know that most English people kept knives under their tongue to stab me," that it was "like a constant aching, no, an irritation, harsh, gritty, this feeling about England and the English . . . their hypocrisy, their self-satisfaction, their bloody, bloody sense of humor." The English sky was like the English soul, "the color of no hope . . . unforgiving." For Anna Morgan, the young actress in Rhys's first novel, *Voyage in the Dark*, the colors of home are "red, purple, blue, gold, all shades of green," while the colors of England are "black, brown, gray . . . the white of people's faces—like woodlice."

Home was the island of Dominica, in the West Indies, where Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams was born in 1890. She was the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a Creole mother whose ancestors had settled in the Caribbean at the end of the 18th century. Until she was sent off to school in Cambridge at 16, Rhys's world was alive with sunlight and heat, with the flamboyant lushness of the tropical wild, the comforts of black servants, the delicious frissons aroused by those servants' stories of witches, zombies, and werewolves and the sinister magic of obeah (the Caribbean form of voodoo). Leaving the green and golden luxuriance of Dominica was the expulsion from Eden into the icy wind and rain and indifferent hearts of England. Rhys would be haunted forever, dreaming and awake, by the idyllic warmth and sweet innocence of her childhood home. After she left Dominica (she wrote to a friend years later) she felt "I would never really belong anywhere . . . and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing."

Ella Williams quickly discovered that she certainly didn't belong in the stifling confines of an English boarding school, and she took off for London to study acting. After rolling around the provinces for a while in the chorus of a touring musical comedy, she realized that she didn't have the talent or the dedication to remain on the stage. Not quite 20, she left the troupe and began an affair with a much older London businessman. She nearly died of a sloppy abortion, and was emotionally shattered when her lover grew bored and moved on. He was not totally unfeeling: he pensioned her off with an allowance sent through his solicitor.

It was a humiliating arrangement, without which she couldn't have survived; later it formed the grim opening of her third novel, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. But the end of the affair was also the beginning of her life as a writer, as she compulsively set down every detail of her happiness and misery in some school notebooks she carried around for years, and eventually used in writing *Voyage in the Dark*. Hopelessly adrift in a cold and lonely world of drab boarding-houses and surly landladies, Rhys nonetheless stayed on in London. Just why she didn't go home at this point is never explained in the autobiography, but one suspects that she hated to admit defeat, even if it meant enduring the squalor of Fulham. And perhaps it was the embryonic sense of herself as a writer, dim as it was at that point of her youth, that held her, however reluctantly, on the outskirts of the literary world.

In 1919 Rhys married a rather louche journalist and poet, Jean Lenglet, part-Dutch and part-French, and moved to Paris. She delighted in the raffish bohemian life of Paris in the '20s as passionately as she loathed England. When her husband was sent to jail for some minor crimes, she was befriended (and seduced) by Ford Madox Ford, who published her first story in his journal *the transatlantic review*. He persuaded her to use the pen name Jean Rhys and entangled her in the bizarre ménage à trois described in *Quartet*. According to Stella Bowen, Ford's longtime mistress, who was far from happy with the newly three-sided ménage, Rhys lived during those early years in Paris in "an underworld of darkness and disorder, where

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officialdom, the bourgeoisie, and the police were the eternal enemies and the fugitive the only hero. . . . [She was] a doomed soul . . . ." Of course this was the hostile judgment of a furiously jealous woman, and hardly to be trusted. Still, it does suggest, in its harsh way, what Rhys was like at the time—reckless, impulsive, mettlesome, very much of a spirited original. Nor were these qualities altogether crushed in the later years of bitter frustration and obscurity.

IT WAS in Paris, where she felt so vitally in her element, that she gave birth to a son, who died in infancy, and to a daughter, who was raised largely by Lenglet in Holland after he and Rhys were divorced. (The daughter's existence, astonishingly, is not even mentioned in *Smile Please*.) And in Paris she found her voice as a writer. Between 1927 and 1939 she published a book of stories, *The Left Bank*, and four extraordinary novels about desperate women: *Quartet* (1928), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). They were praised, and published in America, but soon they sank without a trace. Rhys returned to England in the early '30s and married twice again, but her English husbands were as poor and impractical as she was; and after the outbreak of war in Europe she vanished into the long twilight of silence and poverty, of moving constantly from one ramshackle house to another in more and more isolated country villages.

In 1949 the actress Selma Vaz Dias, eager to do a dramatic adaptation of *Good Morning, Midnight*, had to put an ad in the *New Statesman* to find out whether the author was alive or dead. In the '50s Francis Wyndham, then an editor for the publisher André Deutsch, stumbled on Rhys's novels, and encouraged her, in many letters, to complete the book she struggled with for years. But her disappearance did not really come to an end until 1966, when the success of her last novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, led to her rediscovery on a large scale. She was as though risen from the dead. The four earlier novels were reissued to strong acclaim in all the right literary places. The 76-year-old revenant was suddenly a new star: she won grants and prizes, and was even named a Commander of the British Empire. Wasted by the superhuman effort she had summoned up to finish *Wide Sargasso Sea*, felled by several heart attacks, Rhys stubbornly refused, for 13 more

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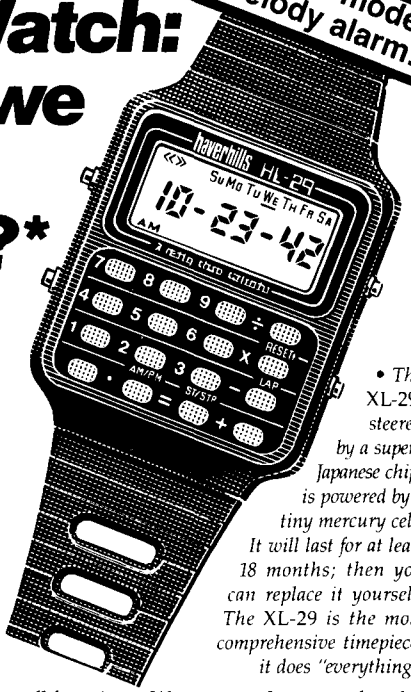

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years, to give up the struggle of living. By the end she felt, as she somberly remarked, that she had "earned death."

IT HAS often been said that a biography of Rhys would be superfluous, because her novels adhere so faithfully to the actual events of her life. (In her will she asked that no biography be written, not because she believed that her fiction had already told the entire story, but because she feared that an outsider was bound to get it wrong.) Like the label "English novelist," the notion that she wrote autobiography in the guise of fiction is a misleading half-truth.

Obviously there are many parallels between the disappointments, disasters, and betrayals Rhys experienced and those of her heroines, who merge in our minds as the same lost and luckless woman seen at different ages as she moves inexorably toward destruction. In *Voyage in the Dark* she is Anna Morgan, a 19-year-old actress aching with homesickness for the West Indies, rejected by an older lover, and almost finished off by an abortion. In *Quartet* she is Marya Zelli, some ten years older than Anna, "reckless, lazy, a vagabond by nature," on her beam end in Paris; and when her shady Polish husband is sent to prison, she reluctantly turns for help to an eccentric English couple who involve her in a sexually bewildering and personally demeaning triangle.

But the links between life and art are much less clear in Rhys's masterpiece, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. Julia Martin, a dreamy and rudderless woman of loose virtue, is growing long in the tooth, her beauty tarnishing rapidly, the stingy allowance from her most recent *protecteur* coming to an end. And in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the final, most harrowing embodiment of the archetypal Rhys woman, Sasha Jansen is on the down slope of middle age, mortally alone and trying to drink herself to death; stripped of every last shred of hope, money, and the will to live; clawed by the memory of her son who died soon after he was born.

But it would be ludicrous, an offense to the brilliant coherence of Rhys's work, to identify the novelist with the vain and brainless demimondaine discarded by Mr. Mackenzie or the suicidal Sasha Jansen. Rhys never denied that her novels and her stories, like those of most writers, began with something that had happened to her, but she fervently believed that it was the task of the writer's imagination to inform the chaos of experience with what she called "shape." As she wrote in a letter to Diana Athill, her friend and editor, "a novel has to have shape, and life doesn't have any."

At the sternly unsentimental heart of her vision was the "shape" she sought to bestow on her grim intimacy with loneliness and fear—an image of modern woman as a displaced person, "too vulnerable ever to make a success of a career of chance," manacled to the desolate isolation of a rootless and aimless freedom. Sasha Jansen, reduced to the dingy solitude of boardinghouse cabbage and cheap hotels, cries, "I have no pride—no pride, no name, no face, no country. I don't belong anywhere." Even the young and still attractive woman in the short story "Till September Petronella" can stiffen her resolve to live only by reminding herself that "I could kill myself any time I like and so end it." Young or old or neither, Rhys's women have been condemned—by themselves, by their pathetic illusions—to the terrified lamentation: "What will become of me?"

Why were these displaced women driven to the edge of (and in the case of Julia Martin, over) the abyss? Because they had wrenched themselves loose from the webs of family and human obligation, cut themselves off from the solacing bonds of existence, and as these connections were carelessly broken they lost any continuing sense of identity. Rhys observes, with characteristic objectivity, that Julia Martin's "career of ups and downs had rubbed most of the hallmarks off her, so that it was not easy to guess at her age, her nationality, or the social background to which she properly belonged."

Without the hallmarks there is no substance. Rhys's hopeless, helpless women are one version of "modern woman." They have severed the ties of necessity only to discover that the freedom they sought is a mockery, that it is only the freedom to live for the haphazard moment, to drift from man to man, to cadge drinks from contemptuous strangers, to die because they do not know how to live. Doing as they please, indifferent to past and to future, they simply go to pieces when they inevitably run out of money, luck, beauty, lovers, hope. Because they do not know what to do with their freedom, it becomes a curse. When Julia Martin is summoned back to England to see her dying mother, her "good" sister, who has sacrificed her life to duty, feels smugly, meanly vindicated by the shabby spectacle of the "bad" sister's deterioration. Like a rat Julia scurries back to her sleazy Paris hotel, and the madness that has been stalking her since "leaving" Mr. Mackenzie moves in for the kill. Though Julia is an irredeemable egotist clutching frantically at her rags of self-pity, Rhys, in the chilling last line of the novel—"It was the hour between dog and wolf, as they say"—grants this hollow bauble of a woman a final, disturbing moment of pathos.

DESPITE RHYS'S ferociously purgatorial rendering of human existence—"eat or be eaten," she wrote, "is the inexorable law of life"—it was her uncannily precise and responsive style that enabled her to maintain the balance between abhorrence and compassion, between an urgently felt intensity and a remorseless, unnerving detachment. Yet in her later years she longed to turn her imagination back to the world she came from, to write about "the vanished West Indies of my childhood . . . for never was anything more vanished and forgotten. Or lovely." Though she did write a few stories about Dominica, which provide some charming (if ephemeral) moments in the newly published gathering of all her short fiction, Rhys hoped to deal more expansively with that vanished

NUCLEAR MEDICINE

Is that my kidney and my swarming bones?
I wonder, could they pick me up in Russia,
All isotope, as the narrator concludes
". . . Her marrow no longer behaves abnormally."
Applause. More X-ray than all of you combined,

From here it's hard to tell one glow from the next.
Enough to be the centerpiece on this slab
Where the mechanism's auto-driven eye
Whirs and pierces, semi-circular, overhead.
"Set me up: I could take down missiles."

Suddenly wanting very much to say,
"Hey, you missed the best part of the story . . ."
But white coats merge until they disappear
Down tiled hallways of you're-still-here,
And the gray-green screen is coming up empty.

STELLA JOHNSTON

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loveliness in her final novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The idea for the book had been simmering in her mind for years. As a young woman in England, reading *Jane Eyre* for the first time, Rhys had been struck by the fact that the mad wife in the attic came from Jamaica, which Charlotte Brontë portrayed as a dark and sinister place of dangerous sensuality. The dashing Rochester, a second son badly in need of money, had gone to the West Indies in search of a wife with an immense dowry, like the American heiresses married to indigent counts and princes in Henry James's novels. But Rochester soon learned the true and appalling nature of his Jamaican wife: she was, as Brontë piled it on with undisguised revulsion, coarse and vile-tongued, intemperate, unchaste, a crazy and murderous monster.

Eager to show how wrong Brontë had been about Creole life and character, "vexed at her portrait of the 'paper tiger' lunatic," as Rhys wrote to a friend, she felt she had discovered the perfect way of rekindling her memories of childhood. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (or *The First Mrs. Rochester*, as she originally called it) the story of the mad wife would reveal how an innocent young Creole woman, knowing nothing of men or the wider world beyond the Indies, is gradually destroyed by the insensitive English husband who is repelled by the hothouse culture, black and white, that nourished her. Through this woman Rhys could take her imagination home again and bring to fresh life its magic, its beauty, even its primitive mystery and violence.

It took her more than ten years to finish the book to her satisfaction, for everything seemed to conspire against it: the infirmities of old age, the chronic worries about money, the unrelenting wind and cold. In rural Cornwall, where she suffered through several winters in a rickety summer cottage, she couldn't find a typist. When she settled in the tiny Devon village ("this *beastly* little place") where she spent her last two decades, the neighbors thought she was a witch and persecuted her.

Memory did not betray her. In the most powerfully realized sections of the novel she evoked the landscape and the vegetation of the Caribbean with shimmering immediacy, and portrayed the recently freed black slaves—superstitious, loving, unpredictable, sly—with unfaltering assurance. Yet ironically the book is weak and unconvincing in its effort to transfigure the characters borrowed from Brontë. Rochester's growing hatred toward the beauty he at first adores and hungrily desires is never made plausible. The insidious revelations that turn his love to loathing are creaky and melodramatic; the woman is too vulnerable and blameless; the husband is too gullible and obtuse, all too English.

It was Rhys's final accusatory gesture against the place where she had been for so long in exile. Yet Rochester's tight-lipped denunciation of his wife's home, as he prepares to take her to England, is too easily made: "I hated the place. . . . I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret world I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness." In this blunt, flat rejection, Rhys hoped to demonstrate how incapable this thick-souled Englishman was of responding to the seductive Caribbean world. But the psychological density, the complex texture of emotion and sex, the ambiguities of love and hate are missing. Clearly Rhys had a far less simple view of the wife's madness than did Brontë, who blamed it on her origins. But in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the tragedy of this terrible marriage eluded Rhys's grasp. Finally it seems puzzling that she chose to remember the island of her childhood in a derivative way. For the casting of one work of literary imagination in the mold of another blurs the difference between them, and muffles the sound of a single reality in the confusing echoes of the past.

WITH THIS collection of her short fiction, the resurrection of Jean Rhys is now complete. It is heartening to realize how much she managed to write in the years when she was believed dead, but the stories, ranging from the 1920s to the 1970s, are on the whole disappointing. Still, even in the hurried early sketches of Paris in *The Left Bank*, we can immediately recognize Rhys's distinct and unmistakable literary turf: a floating, inconstant world of gigolos, artist's models, con men, and rejected women sinking into "the bitter and dangerous voluptuousness of misery." The Paris she made so vividly her own was a maze of narrow streets jammed with noisy cafés and "horrible men who walked softly behind one for several steps before they spoke," a menacing quarter of cheap hotels perfect for suicide, with their dripping taps, their naked light bulbs, their smell of fear. But these early stories don't burrow into the mind the way the novels do. Most of the Paris vignettes now seem as dated as Katherine Mansfield's artfully breathless snippets of the "real life" of Paris in the 1920s.

Like the Australian Christina Stead, that other colonial writer, Rhys needed the scope of a novel to define her singular and frightening vision of life. In the brief span of a short story she couldn't do justice to her mercilessly observant eye. In most of the pieces in this volume she sounds impatient to get it over with, and tends to settle, uncharacteristically,

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for neat, trite endings very much against her grain. But in one remarkable story, "I Spy a Stranger," which she probably wrote during the Second World War, she did make powerful use of her lifelong alienation from England, and gave that estrangement an idiosyncratic shape entirely her own.

An elderly woman, Laura, who has lived on the Continent for many years, is forced to return to England during the war, and is assaulted by the mindless xenophobic bigots in a country village. When she tries to fight back with a "foreign" weapon, irony, the villagers decide she is a German spy, and eventually she is driven into the madhouse. We get to know her mainly through a sad and witty notebook she keeps, in a futile attempt to hang on to her sanity. She cheers herself up with sardonically imagined titles of books about women, such as *Misogyny and British Humor*, which, she dryly adds, "will write itself." In these notes Rhys lets fly at the crabbed narrowness of the English with a directness she rarely indulged so nakedly in her work:

> There is something strange about the [English] attitude to women as women. Not the dislike (or fear). That isn't strange of course. But it's all so completely taken for granted. . . . It has settled down and become an atmosphere . . . a climate, and no one questions it, least of all the women themselves. There is *no* opposition. . . . Most of the women seem to be carefully trained to revenge any unhappiness they feel on each other, or on children. . . . In dealing with men as a whole, a streak of subservience, of servility, usually appears, something cold, calculating, lacking in imagination.

Shrewd and angry words, from which we might be tempted to think that Rhys shared the feminists' concern about the oppression of women in a society dominated by men. But her mind did not work in such categorical ways, and the nervous despair that runs so wide and deep through her books attests to a more unsettling view of woman's fate. She had been mistreated by men such as Ford Madox Ford, but her idea of herself was not solely that of a victim. She felt no vengeful defiance. When an interviewer once suggested that she hated men, she was shocked, and firmly denied it. For Rhys the final reality was an irreducible sense of herself as an individual. Even in the bleakest circumstances she insisted on both the intuitive and the aesthetic power of her femininity, a sensibility at once vulnerable and seductively charming. But femininity is not feminism, and feminism is not the whole of the literary imagination, which transcends conventional distinctions between male and female attitudes and judgments. If she assigned blame anywhere, it was to "the whole system" that could be so "rotten," the demeaning, ignoble humiliations of disappointment, cruelty, and failed expectations. Writing was the only defense she had against the darkness.

Yet Jean Rhys was more than a martyr to poverty and neglect, and the place to see her whole is in her letters, which were published a few years ago. They were written to the very few who read and admired her novels during the years when they were hard to find; to her daughter, who married a Dutch businessman and lived in Indonesia for many years; to the editors who encouraged her so patiently when she was writing *Wide Sargasso Sea*. These marvelous letters make one feel especially incensed about the portrait of Rhys in her last years—a silly, feeble, maudlin old drunk—that her friend David Plante drew in a tasteless and ungenerous memoir called *Difficult Women*. The letters that streamed from her fingers with such unflagging vitality and wit during the drought-ridden decades are a record of gallantry triumphing over bitterness, of a warm, very feminine, feisty spirit determined to outwit the worst of times and relish the best. They prove that, unlike her heroic heroines, she did know how to live.

PEARL K. BELL

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THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AT LARGE

How Institutions Think
by Mary Douglas

(Syracuse University Press, 160 pp., $19.95, $10.95 paper)

All social scientists are afflicted by the sense that society at large is insufficiently aware of the benefactions that their own specialized field of study has to bestow upon it, but none more strongly than anthropologists. We are stereotyped, in the academic mind and the popular, as connoisseurs of the exotic, the primitive, the parochial, or the out of date, but we see ourselves, as Lévi-Strauss once put it, in possession of "the principle of all research," and are beset with the feeling that we are somehow not getting through. It is not being underappreciated that galls us; we get perhaps more than our share of celebration. It is being appreciated for the wrong reasons—not really being listened to.

Most anthropologists take this state of affairs in stride, or at least as something about which not much can be done, and stick to their monographs. But in every generation there are a few irritable souls who do not, who commit themselves to imparting "the lessons of anthropology" to the world in general, whether or not the world in general much cares to hear them. Margaret Mead, of course, is the most famous of these lapel grabbers, at one time or another addressing almost every public or intellectual issue in sight in terms of what studies of Samoans or Balinese "have revealed." Bronislaw Malinowski, Ruth Benedict, Ashley Montague, Lévi-Strauss himself, and, more recently, Marvin Harris have been similarly concerned to get the message (if not exactly the same message) out. But in our time no one has been more resolute, or more resourceful, in undermining the quirks and curios image of anthropology than Mary Douglas. Rich in opinion, emphatic in style, and interested in virtually everything, she has come to instruct.

Douglas's "principle of all research" is derived from Emile Durkheim, the great French social theorist of the early part of this century. As such principles ought properly to be, it is direct, unshaded, and apparently simple: human thinking is "socially controlled." Individual thought, always and everywhere, has social origins. "Classifications, logical operations, and guiding metaphors are given to the individual by society," Douglas writes in her new book. "[The] sense of a priori rightness of some ideas and the nonsensicality of others are handed out as part of the social environment."

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Epistemology is, consequently, less a philosophical enterprise (and even less a psychological one) than a sort of social anthropology of the mind; it is a matter of causally connecting particular systems of belief, like sorcery or supply side economics, to the institutional structures of the particular societies in which they are found and, conversely, of connecting the institutional structures to the systems of belief. It is not "reasonings," "reflections," "imaginings," and "introspections" taking place in Gilbert Ryle's famous secret grottoes in the head to which we must attend, but rather "schools of thought," "cognitive communities," or, as Douglas now prefers, "thought worlds," which are sustained by, and themselves sustain, in a sort of sociological perpetual motion, social forms. *This*, not the fact that they don't wear trousers in the Amazon, is What Anthropology Has To Tell Us. "The individual mind [is] society writ small." "The entrenching of an idea [in a mind] is a social process." "The entrenching of an institution [in a society] is . . . an intellectual process . . . ."

In a society such as ours, which hands out a size-up-and-solve individualism, in which everything from sexual behavior to income distribution is explained in terms of self-interested calculators making strategic choices, this is not an easy argument to get across. The mere presentation of it draws accusations (as it did when Durkheim first enunciated it) of belief in a group mind, in mob psychology, in moral relativism, in social determinism. Douglas, who believes in none of these (except, unsteadily, in social determinism), has nonetheless spent a quarter century extending and developing her argument in a dizzying array of subjects. Study by study, and damn the torpedoes, she has applied it to the social organization of a near-anarchic African tribe, to the dietary laws of the ancient Hebrews, to contemporary ecological movements and the fear of technology on which they feed, to the scientific literature on risk perception and decision-making, to the way in which the English organize their Sunday dinners, to the capitalist "world of goods" and "the growing swell of protest against the consumer society," to witchcraft, cosmology, humor, memory, causality, and, in the present book (which she says, ingenuously, should be read as a post hoc preface to all the others), to rational choice theory, the history of science, political philosophy, sociological functionalism, kidney dialysis, and the difference between French and Californian modes of classifying wines. Not a sparrow falls.

HOW INSTITUTIONS THINK is virtually all sparrows, most of them falling—a few dismissive pages on Mancur Olson, a few even more dismissive pages on Max Weber; some offhand paragraphs on famine, some even more offhand paragraphs on category formation; a passage on women, economists, analogy, and authority, followed by one on bricolage, followed by one on biological determinism; a couple of lines on natural kinds, a couple more on ancestor worship. But one figure and one book, odd and unexpected, are given what center stage is left amid the clatter of pronouncements. That figure is held to have effected a powerful extension of the Durkheimian approach. He is Ludwig Fleck, a Polish epidemiologist, and his book is the near-forgotten 1935 study of "the discovery" of syphilis, *The Genesis and Development of Scientific Fact.*

In Fleck's concept of a *Denkkollectiv*, or "thought collective," governed by a *Denkstil*, or "thought style," Douglas sees a way to fend off the attacks upon Durkheimians for imagining that groups have minds while retaining the view that thinking is a social activity "controlled by institutions." Fleck regarded the sorting out of syphilis, whose character as a specifically regarded disease was identified from a confusion of ill-defined and improperly classified venereal afflictions, as a collective achievement, both because an extensive community of near-anonymous researchers was involved and because "the insistent clamor of public opinion" for a cure drove the enterprise on. It was Fleck, not Durkheim (who regarded the notion of a "sovereign thought style" as applicable only to homogeneous primitive societies dominated by religion, not to complex modern ones driven by science), who made the idea that institutions "think" fully general. "For Fleck the thought style [of the thought collective] is as sovereign for the thinker as Durkheim held collective representations to be in a primitive culture, but Fleck was not talking about primitives."

All this is an excellent beginning. If it were followed by an orderly exposition of Fleck's really extraordinary account of how syphilis came to be a "scientific fact," and by a systematic examination of the rather deep questions it raises for the sociology of knowledge, we might finally have what we have long been waiting for from Douglas: a direct confrontation with the make-or-break issue for the Durkheimian tradition, which is the nature, the extent, and the material foundations of social causation.

But that is not what happens. What comes instead is one undeveloped comment after another, on assorted topics from the shortcomings of rational choice theory or neuro-psychological studies on forgetting to the virtues of cybernetics or sociological functionalism (whatever, in short, is on Douglas's mind)—with hardly anything more said, aside from a totemic re-invocation now and then, about Fleck, his book, or his ideas. Whether one finds this way with things exhilarating, because of the brilliance and the breadth of knowledge displayed, and the marvelous one-liners it produces ("The competitive society celebrates its heroes, the hierarchy celebrates its patriarchs, and the sect its martyrs"), or maddening, because of the sense of never quite getting to the point and of changing the subject as soon as matters get interesting and questions vexed, rather depends on one's temperament, and on how one reacts to oracles in general. But it does seem an odd way to attempt a settled and exceptionless universal argument.

THE CENTRAL question, in fact, is just how settled, how exceptionless and universal, how strong Douglas wishes her argument to be. In some of her works, most notably in *Purity and Danger* (on the Hebrew dietary laws) and *Natural Symbols* (on comparative cosmology), she seems to want to make it very strong indeed. Groups of human beings are possessed, on the one hand, of general images (religious, scientific, or ideological), of images of "the way things are," and are caught up, on the other, in crystallized modes of social relationships—clans, markets, bureaucracies, sects. The two, sovereign thoughts and sovereign institutions, reinforce one another in a self-sustaining causal loop.

But in other of her works, including this one, there is an emphasis on the ability of individuals to resist this loop or to change it, to act against the grain of culture, to withstand the pressures of social structure: to think, as we should say, for themselves. The result of these vacillations between hard and soft versions of Durkheimian sociologism is that Douglas's vocabulary for describing the

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relation between "thoughts" and "institutions" is vague and unstable. Thinking "depends" upon institutions, "arises within" them, "fits" or "reflects" them. Institutions "control" thought, or they "shape," "condition," "direct," "influence," "regulate," or "constrain" it. Thought "sustains," "constructs," "supports," or "underlies" institutions. The thesis stutters.

Sociologists of knowledge (or anthropologists of the mind) from Karl Mannheim to Douglas's mentor, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, have all been caught between asserting the strong form of the doctrine—that thought is a sheer reflex of social conditions—which nobody, themselves included, can really believe, and the weak one—that thought is to some degree influenced by social conditions and influences them in turn, which hardly says enough for anyone to want to deny it. Douglas is scarcely to be censured for not resolving the issue, which may be unresolvable. But she must be criticized for refusing so resolutely really to join it. Having written a number of extremely imaginative empirical studies of the relations between what people think and how they live, and now a lively, suggestive, but oddly distracted after-the-fact "introduction" to the entire question of thought and social structure, one hopes that Douglas will finally proceed to close in on the problems of the Durkheimian project in some sustained, explicit, and head-on way. But her method in this book leaves the project about where she found it: drifting. Remarks, as Gertrude Stein remarked, are not literature.

CLIFFORD GEERTZ

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A STREETCAR NAMED SYOSSET

That Night
by Alice McDermott

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 184 pp., $14.95)

Sherrryyyyy! Young Marlon Brando-like Rick yells outside his girlfriend Sheryl's house, filling the neighborhood with the sound of his cry and creating the scene that dominates Alice McDermott's second novel, *That Night*. "He stood on the short lawn before her house, his knees bent, his fists driven into his thighs, and bellowed her name with such passion that even the friends who surrounded him, who had come . . . to murder her family if they had to, let the chains they carried go limp in their hands." This scene of violent passion is acted not in the stark setting of *A Streetcar Named Desire* but in the bucolic nest of the American Dream. The haunting cry of loss is set against the "staccato hum" of lawn mowers and "the collective gurgle of filters in backyard pools." These are suburbs transformed by love: "Venus was there," we are told, and what seems at first to be a teenage sex story turns into an engrossing tale about loss and fulfillment, memory and illusion.

Rick is bellowing outside Sheryl's house because he hasn't been able to see her. He and his friends have arrived in a convoy of "hot rods" to get Sheryl and "kill that old bitch" (Sheryl's widowed mother). Rick's mother has often unexpectedly left home to go into mental institutions, and Rick sees the same thing in Sheryl's disappearance: he fears she has changed into another person overnight. He doesn't know that Sheryl is pregnant and has been sent to relatives in Ohio to have the baby. At the sound of Rick's cry, the story's narrator (an unnamed woman, now an adult, looking back nostalgically on her childhood) says that her "ten-year-old heart was stopped by the beauty of it all."

McDermott's first novel, *A Bigamist's Daughter*, explored the way people use fictions to hide or transform the defeats and banalities of their lives. Elizabeth, an editor of a vanity press, tells her lover a story of a past love affair and attempts to transform herself and the affair through embellishments in her retelling. By the end of that novel, Elizabeth is more comfortable with unadorned reality. In *That Night*, McDermott goes one step further and introduces a narrator who is both a character within and the creator of the story she tells, and who, also, embellishes her story in an attempt to transform the ordinary into the mythical—thereby revealing the transforming powers of memory and of stories themselves.

The narrator tells us: "It's nostalgia that makes me say it, . . . but there was no boredom in these suburbs." Yet behind the narrator's purple-tinted memories is routine. The "housebound and yardbound" men of the neighborhood cry out for something more. When Rick comes to take Sheryl, they emerge as protectors carrying makeshift weapons and clumsily battle the teenage boys. After the fight, pulled together in their new role, the men gather, "heady with the taste of their own blood," to "reenact in slow, stylized motion the blows they'd given, the blows they had received, adding now the grace that had been missing from the original performance, the witty dialogue, the triumph." Even the narrator is disappointed in their performance: she expected D'Artagnan.

The irony is sometimes cruel. McDermott seems closer to the women in her story: she takes us into their houses and exposes the painful realities of maintaining the dream of suburban life. The neighbors find a utopia in the home of Mrs. Carpenter's family. The upstairs of the Carpenter house, the "enchanted, mist-shrouded heights," is the model of suburban decoration. The family lives in the basement. Mrs. Carpenter ("more artist than eccentric") has created "Beauty" she hopes to save from "the ravages of . . . ash-dropping Time":

> The master bedroom was a sultan's palace, deep green and pink and silver with drapes hanging where there weren't even windows. Not a thing out of place, not a thing that didn't match. A gold swan spouting water in the bathroom sink, its wings Hot and Cold.

The narrator's mother comes back from a tour of the upstairs "holding her heart" and saying there is "nothing else like it in the world. The shine on the dining room table was blinding." Mrs. Carpenter sits in this pathetic paradise with "the bored distracted air of someone simply waiting to see how things turn out."

Sheryl's untimely pregnancy is set against some of the neighborhood women's pathetic attempts at conception, with their "voodoo" rituals—"hot water douches and citrus diets and intercourse performed with your head and throat hanging off the side of the bed." The

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narrator realizes that what her own mother is really attempting to conceive is "insurance" against the invalidity of her own existence. Leela, a friend of the narrator's mother, tries all of the above remedies, and says to her husband that if she fails she is "neither male nor female; I cannot know my worth."

WHILE THE women inside engage in their nightly gymnastics, Sheryl and Rick are making love in a park, a forestlike setting where, like Hawthorne's lovers in *A Scarlet Letter*, they can obliterate the world beyond. The narrator, as a child, is lucky enough to have a visit from the mysterious older Sheryl, who helps her dress a Barbie doll and who tells her, "I know all those things that other people think are important come down to nothing. They disappear." If Rick, Sheryl tells her, "had died before he met me, everybody . . . would have forgotten about him. . . . But I wouldn't forget." These words echo when the narrator lets us in on the scene in the park: "Sheryl would whisper, 'Before me you would have been forgotten.' " As the narrator tells it, these teenagers making love in a park are one with the natural world: "Perhaps by then he understood only that when she spoke of dying he should turn to her, loosen the scarf at her throat . . . gently push her back onto the grass." But reality breaks in on this idyll; later, in Ohio, Sheryl's cousin Pam, a plump, happily married housewife and mother, tells her that she too was in love like Sheryl, and that "what seems like a terrible loss to you now will only seem natural . . . ."

McDermott disappoints our expectations in the same way. The narrator takes us into the future beyond "that night" as the neighbors gather for a funeral. They look back wistfully at the young couple and the events of the night. Sheryl, a skinny girl with a flat round face—who wears Banlon sweaters, Woolworth scarves, and too much pancake makeup and black eyeliner, and who carries a turquoise comb in her pocket—is remembered as being as beautiful as a Miss America contestant. Though she ends up married with "two kids and a house and all," the women of the neighborhood "had hoped or imagined something more for Sheryl," more than "a life like theirs." Rick, whose youthful role has been that of passionate lover—a suburban Stanley Kowalski—grows to be an ordinary, nondescript family man with two kids.

Rick's cry, taken up by the whole neighborhood in "one, inharmonious wail," is the cry of loss answered by illusion. Suburbia has created its own romantic myth, one of cozy security: "Under the moon and the stars, there were identical rooftops and chimneys and TV antennas, no minarets or onion domes, and the trees that caught and muffled the lamplight were ordinary oak and maple." Yet things still happen there. Fathers die on their way to work, children are killed, and love is made powerless. On the way home from the hospital where Sheryl has left her baby behind, she gains comfort from the "blind, insistent longing that this emptiness be filled again."

The narrator provides potent ironies about the disillusionment of "coming of age," but her voice is sometimes a hindrance. It keeps us too distant from the other characters, too close to her, and at times the narrator's personal asides are more distraction than illumination. But this is minor, and doesn't diminish the novel's power significantly. McDermott's lyrical prose draws us along. The "howling wail" touches us too, and when the narrator says that these suburbs are not boring, we are lured into belief. Embellishing the night by telling us "Venus was there" seems heavy-handed; the moon perhaps would have sufficed. But like the narrator we accept the illusion of Venus and undying love. McDermott's suburbs are about the longing for an "irretrievable past," for the way life was before we knew there was a difference between the life of the basement and the one upstairs.

KAREN AHLEFELDER WATKINS

MR. BLOOM'S PLANET

The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students by Allan Bloom

(Simon and Schuster, 392 pp., $18.95)

Allan Bloom is a man who knows his own mind, and who thinks well of what he finds there. He is therefore in a good position to explain to people who are a little less sure of themselves just what it is that ails them. *The Closing of the American Mind* is that explanation, presented in the style of an unusually articulate, unusually engaging, and unusually long undergraduate lecture. Many people who are no longer undergraduates have declared themselves glad for the instruction. Undergraduates have reason to feel a little less grateful.

For Bloom's book is a critique of the contemporary university, and it begins with a critique of the contemporary student. "Souls artificially constituted by a new kind of education" is the way he describes today's students. Made "nice," but "not particularly moral or noble," by the lack of contraints on their choices, jaded by premature sexual experience, polluted by the "junk food" of rock music ("our greatest corruption"), they "live in a world transformed by man's artifice and believe that all values are relative and determined by the private economic or sexual drives of those who hold them. How are they to recover the primary natural experience?"

The university's way of ministering to these souls is not Bloom's way—for the simple reason that "the primary natural experience" is the kind of phrase most academics tend to regard with, at the least, skepticism. That skepticism is responsible, Bloom argues, for the disciplinary fragmentation, the theoretical incoherence, the intellectual trendiness, and the pedagogical laxness of our elite universities. He's right, but that doesn't mean the skepticism is wrong.

The bulk of *The Closing of the American Mind* is devoted to an extended narrative in which the history of civilization, cast as the story of thinking heads, is shown to lead by logical progression (or regression) to our present condition. The chief brains in the story are those of Socrates, who established philosophy as the queen of the sciences by showing the ex-

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ercise of reason to be the highest fulfillment of our natures; of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke, who compromised philosophy's standing as an autonomous enterprise by enlisting it in the service of politics; of Rousseau, who further damaged philosophy's prepotence by questioning the value of reason; of Nietzsche, who exacerbated the damage by questioning the value of values; and of Heidegger, who carried the denaturing of philosophy to its conclusion when he endorsed National Socialism in its name.

THAT HE should choose to account for what he regards as our current cultural crisis by means of a story about books indicates succinctly enough the extent of Bloom's divergence from conventional thinking. His argument, as he admits, depends on the belief that "the intellect has an effect on history." No doubt it does. The question is, What affects the intellect? This is the question that informs virtually all of modern thought—from Hobbes and Locke, who founded their political philosophies on an epistemology that considered ideas to be the product of sensations received from external objects; to Rousseau; to Marx; to Freud; to the contemporary academic who explains why people think what they think by genetics or by climatology or by the web of "power relations."

Bloom parts company with all these thinkers not because he disagrees with their answers, but because he does not recognize the legitimacy of the question. *Nothing* affects the exercise of true intellect; its subject is nature and its object is the truth. "Nature" cannot be historicized: my idea of what is natural must, if it is rational, be the same as Plato's. And "truth" cannot be relativized: if you believe a thing is good and I believe it is bad, one of us must be wrong. The university, in Bloom's view, should be the place where for four years young people can withdraw from the degenerated culture of modernity and contemplate the true and the good—which are embodied in the classic texts. Bloom wants the academy to be an ivory tower.

The best test of Bloom's project is Bloom's own book. The evidence it offers is not encouraging: it seems that there is far less in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in his philosophy. It is not just that modern society is floated on the corrupted values of a debilitated tradition; it is that its young people can already be declared soul-dead.

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What are the facts?

■ Israel is a multi-racial society. Its citizens, most of them "immigrants", or children and grandchildren of immigrants, come from all corners of the globe. More than 55% are what we would call "non-Caucasians". In the last few years, the government has expended much effort and money to ingather the Black Jews of Ethiopia. The concept of apartheid, of race discrimination, is repugnant to Israelis and to the Jewish religion. Condemnation of apartheid has been publicly expressed by every Israeli Prime Minister, beginning with David Ben Gurion.

■ Israel is not a significant factor in the arms trade with South Africa. The main suppliers of weaponry to that country are France, Britain, Canada, West Germany, Italy, India, and the United States. But South Africa has its own arms industry. It entered into a $1 billion barter deal with Iran, by which it would supply weapons—mostly light and heavy artillery and shells—in exchange for oil. Ironically, but not surprisingly, a similar barter contract—for $750 million—was signed with Iraq.

■ Oil is the life blood of South Africa's economy. All of it is imported, and not a drop comes from Israel, of course. Virtually every barrel of the approximately $2 billion of yearly oil import comes from the Arabs—most of it from Saudi Arabia.

■ How about trade in general? The principal trading partners of South Africa in 1986 were in that order: U.S.A., $3.4 billion (exports and imports); Japan, $2.9 billion; Germany, $2.8 billion; U.K., $2.6 billion—with Israel far in the rear with a total trade of $0.2 billion, less than 1% of South Africa's total trade. And that does not take into account South Africa's vast (unrecorded) trade with the Black African countries, its collusive trading relationships in diamonds and precious metals with the Soviet Union, and its huge barter trade for oil with the Arab countries and Iran.

■ The Arab countries (with the exception of Egypt) consider themselves to be in a state of war with Israel. They do not trade with Israel at all. Other major countries such as Japan, India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia are in sympathy with the Arabs or afraid of Arab reprisals. They do not trade with Israel either or only to a negligible extent. Israel, in order to survive, cannot be too choosy with whom to trade. But, in any case, political approval would not seem to be a requirement for trade. After all, the United States and other Western democracies deal with South Africa, with the Soviet Union, and with other countries of whose politics they disapprove.

■ Israel has been repeatedly singled out and condemned for alleged nuclear collaboration with South Africa. It is a charge that Israel has denied categorically and constantly. A recent U.N. document—"South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Capability"—mentions certain countries in connection with nuclear collaboration with South Africa. Israel is not among them.

The facts are clear: Israel is a very minor player in trade and military relations with South Africa, has no nuclear cooperation, and has at all times condemned and denounced apartheid. In formulating policy towards South Africa, Israel, just as in its dealings with the Soviet Union, must take into account the vulnerable position of that country's large Jewish community. The perception that Israel has a particularly close relationship with South Africa is fostered by the Arabs, is based on distortion, and stems from hostility to Israel. A Congressional Committee and the Black Caucus of Congress have commended Israel for its government's resolution of March 18, 1987, regarding its relations with South Africa. Critics of Israel would also do well to judge it position on racism by its prodigious 20-year record of unprecedented development aid programs in 31 Black African countries.

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When confronting the depredations of contemporary life, Bloom's favorite weapon of analysis is the paradox. It's one of the attractive features of his thought: it cuts issues open economically, it makes us rethink, it annoys—it's Socratic. Thus: the shibboleth "openness"—the refusal to condemn another's views—has closed our minds; having the freedom to choose means being imprisoned by the fads of the day; feminism, by creating conflicting responsibilities for family and career, has led to the oppression of women; affirmative action is responsible for the deterioration of race relations; and so forth.

These arguments are by now old friends. They have been with us since the '60s; they are the starting blocks for neoconservatism and neoliberalism alike. A mind that refuses to admit their cogency is indeed a closed one. But so is a mind that thinks posing the paradox is enough to discredit the position. Having pointed out the familiar ironies of modern life, Bloom feels licensed to condemn the entire worldview that contains them; and it would be interesting to know just how far down this road those who have so unreservedly praised his book (it has been received enthusiastically in France as well) really care to accompany him.

The "openness" young people make such a virtue of is, Bloom explains, the consequence of their "relativism." Coming from a philosopher, this is, to put it kindly, disingenuous. "Relativism" is a philosophical scare word. It is the belief that on any given subject one opinion is as good as any other opinion. No one thinks this—least of all college students. What many people do think, including some college students, is that it is important to show respect for the views of others—particularly those who show little respect for one's own view. People who think this are not relativists, for the obvious reason that they believe that "openness" is the "right" view to hold.

Of course tolerance for the intolerant has an outer limit. It is our official position as a society that the line gets drawn at the point where expression turns into action, where an intolerant attitude becomes an intolerant practice. But Bloom thinks this is much too generous:

> Freedom of thought and freedom of speech were proposed in theory . . . in order to encourage the still voice of reason in a world that had always been dominated by fanaticisms and interests. . . . The authors of *The Federalist* . . . were not particularly concerned with protecting eccentric or mad opinions or lifestyles. Such protection . . . is only an incidental result of the protection of reason, and loses plausibility if reason is rejected.

Emergency powers for the reasonable man: if his sense of logic is offended, the right of others to offend it may be suspended. But it is precisely offensive speech (leaving aside the question of mad lifestyles) that the First Amendment is designed to protect. Who cares about regulating the reasonable?

Bloom's point about feminism is not that it burdens women with the impossible chore of producing a family while pursuing a career, since this is a practical problem and therefore presumably admits of a practical solution. His point is philosophical: "The women's movement is not founded on nature." Which gives rise to the following bit of cultural history, meant to show the way prior arrangements respected nature's law: "That man is not made to be alone is all very well," Bloom speculates, "but who is made to live with him? This is why men and women hesitated before marriage, and courtship was thought necessary to find out whether the couple was compatible, and perhaps to give them basic training in compatibility." But this makes nonsense of the notion of the natural, since courtship is a historically and culturally specific institution, by no means the universal norm, and the idea that marriage is founded on compatibility or is a response to existential aloneness would have seemed eccentric before the 18th century. This little piece of the argument is emblematic of Bloom's whole critique: the academic in the ivory tower manages, by the exercise of unadulterated reason, to produce a philosophical justification for the status quo ante.

BUT THE MOST notable feature of the book is its attack on youth and its culture, an attack that shows a spirit that can hardly be called generous and a habit of mind that can hardly be called open:

> Picture a 13-year-old boy sitting in the living room of his family home doing his math assignment while wearing his Walkman headphones or watching MTV. He enjoys the liberties hard won over centuries by the alliance of philosophic genius and political heroism, consecrated by the blood of martyrs; he is provided with comfort and leisure by the most productive economy ever known to mankind; science has penetrated the secrets of nature in order to provide him with the marvelous, lifelike electronic sound and image reproduction he is enjoying. And in what does progress culminate? A pubescent child whose body throbs with orgasmic rhythms; whose feelings are made articulate in hymns to the joys of onanism or the killing of parents; whose ambition is to win fame and wealth in imitating the drag-queen who makes the music. In short, life is made into a non-stop, commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy.

I suspect that one of the reasons *The Closing of the American Mind* has evoked so much unqualified praise is that it gratifies our wish to think ill of our culture (a wish that is a permanent feature of modernity) without thinking ill of ourselves. It does this by making young people our scapegoats—something that has become a bad cultural habit recently. Their toys, their entertainments, their efforts to make sense of the world are all derided by Bloom. Today's students be-

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long to a demographically powerless generation; they are squeezed between the baby boom and the baby boomers' children. Caught in an older generation's backlash against its own former values, they have been blamed for drugs, for promiscuity, for cultural illiteracy. Now they discover that they are unworthy to sit at the feet of Socrates. They deserve better than this from those who would be their teachers.

LOUIS MENAND

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

a few salient facts that go a long way in explaining the size of the verdict. Texaco's lawyers, as a matter of trial strategy, chose not to dispute the measure of damages that Pennzoil urged upon the court. Pennzoil argued that neither it nor Texaco was primarily interested in the value of Getty's stock, but solely in obtaining Getty's oil reserves, which were then increasing in value and which would be expensive to duplicate by drilling new wells. Texaco made no contrary argument, and thus the $7.5 billion in actual damages once the jury found that Texaco had indeed interfered in Pennzoil's contractual relations with Getty.

One may be able to argue that the trial court misapplied New York contract law, but that point should not obscure the fact that both Texaco and Pennzoil agreed to move the trial to Houston, and to have the Texas courts apply New York contract law. Lovers of justice need shed no tears for Texaco, nor cast any aspersions on the Texas legal system.

DAVID L. SHAPIRO
Austin, Texas

PROTESTING 'HANOI'

To the editors:

For the most part I appreciate Stanley Kauffmann's movie reviews, but I protest his attempt, in the discussion of *Hanoi Hilton* ("Hanoi and Elsewhere," April 27), to apply the liberal brand of historical revisionism that is currently in vogue regarding Vietnam. His assertion that North Vietnam's application of the Geneva Convention if the U.S. declared war was "open to question" was hardly that. The barbaric treatment of U.S. POWs would not have changed based on a piece of paper making the war "official." And although the lack of anti-war protesters would not have allowed the U.S. to sweep north and open the prison gates, the presence of the anti-war movement had a detrimental effect on the morale and performance of many of our Vietnam veterans.

The statement that "we never held that the northern angels were pitted against southern devils" and that the sole purpose of the peace movement was to get the U.S. out of Vietnam is equally absurd. The victory of North Vietnam was exactly what large numbers of the peace protesters wanted (remember "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, NLF is gonna win"?).

Although it may be a "widely held belief" in Mr. Kauffmann's circle that the U.S. and South Vietnam could not win the war "short of nuclear blasting," the opposite is true. Look at the 1968 Tet offensive. By any *objective* standard, the U.S. and South Vietnam inflicted a devastating military defeat on the VC and the NVA, which somehow was transformed into an American defeat in the U.S. media. This failure to acknowledge that the U.S. and its allies could win in the field added to the national disenchantment with the war, and the eventual pullout.

TIMOTHY M. MCLAUGHLIN
Annapolis, Maryland

FACTIONAL DISPUTE

To the editors:

In "Geezer Sleaze" (April 20), Crocker Coulson attributes to the Founding Fathers the belief that political factions, which he equates to interest groups, are vital to democracy, citing part of James Madison's definition of faction in The Federalist No. 10. I find it difficult to infer that meaning from a document that begins: "Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of factions." Madison did not consider any special interest group a faction—only those "united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the ... interests of the community." He certainly did not regard these factions as vital to democracy. He considered them democracy's single greatest threat to stability, justice, and order—and the cause of the demise of all previous popular governments.

WILLIAM GOELKEL
Canoga Park, California

TRB, *from page 4*

they peer down a novel trail, steep and winding, and wonder where it will lead. Is there no limit on what we should feel free, or even obligated, to publish about people's private lives? Of course there is. I propose a simple test. Is this something that you believe a significant fraction of your audience will find politically relevant? Not just interesting (we all love gossip): Will it affect how people vote? If so, go with it. Who are you to say it's none of their business?

Thoughtful observers (those inveterate party poopers) worry that relentless scrutiny of private foibles will drive good people out of public office, and leave us with gray automatons who have nothing to hide. I doubt that the flame of political ambition can be snuffed so easily. In any event, why do Washington sophisticates suppose that this is a danger that voters around the country can't also recognize and account for?

It's possible that politicians and journalists underestimate the sophistication of their constituents and readers. Representative Gerry Studds gets regularly reelected in Massachusetts after having admitted a liaison with a male congressional page. In Nebraska—Nebraska!—Governor Bob Kerry's poll ratings shot up every time actress Debra Winger came for a weekend in the governor's mansion. Someday a presidential candidate will say to the voters: look, my marriage is a bust, I'm only human, I need a little relief from the pressures of public life. And the voters may turn out to understand this just as well as the elitists who want to keep such obvious truths from them.

That candidate won't be Gary Hart. Even before the town house episode, he had publicly locked himself into the conventions of rectitude. The fact that he did so and then apparently couldn't adhere to them—even for a few months—raises doubts about his judgment and self-control that must trouble even the most principled Dionysian.

Nevertheless, I sense no "fit of morality" erupting among the American public. If the new honesty in the press about politicians' canoodling leads to more honesty among politicians themselves, we might well find that the voters really don't care so much what elected officials do in private. Then we can go back to discussing the issues, as everybody hypocritically claims to want.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Social Surveys and Social Indices

I DON'T KNOW how many Washington taxi drivers are foreigners, documented or otherwise, but it certainly is a large percentage. Many of these come from Iran and Ethiopia. It's not until you hear him conversing with his radio dispatcher in Farsi or Amharic, though, that you can figure out which of the particularly unhappy countries, in that arc of misery that sweeps from Afghanistan west and south across the Levant and into Africa, your driver comes from. Displaced though they may feel, these cabdrivers have done relatively well here. One reason is that they have preserved those primordial ties that bind—and help. There are Persian taxi enterprises and Ethiopian ones and others, based on what the Jews used to call *landsman*, among Afghanis and Pakistanis and Nigerians, who are themselves divided into the fissiparous tribes we remember from their civil war of 20 years ago. Many native American cabbies deride this successful solidarity as "clannishness," the same resentful term that greeted the first groping steps of mobility by earlier immigrant groups. Unlike previous immigrants, most of whom intended to stay from the start, many of these still long to go back. They are here because history has, so to speak, been done to their peoples cruelly. And to none more disenchantingly cruelly in recent years than to the Iranians and Ethiopians. To be sure, the bombs rained on Afghanistan by the Soviet Union—whatever happened to that much touted imminent Russian withdrawal?—may now make the Afghanis the world's most imperiled populace. But there is no disenchantment in being victims of plain aggression by a well-known mass-murderer state. The Iranians and the Ethiopians, on the other hand, had different hopes for their countries, hopes tied to the end of the old regime, hopes that were actively encouraged by all the good people of the West. In this sense, they are like the Chinese who came to America in the '50s and the Vietnamese who arrived two decades later, escapees from the benefits of the revolutionary tide. The Shah and the emperor are now long since gone, but those hopes are also long since exhausted. The revolution has come and entrenched itself, and all the good people of the West, and particularly the habitually mischievous church people, have averted their eyes and closed their ears. Some months ago an Ethiopian cabdriver picked me up at National Airport, and he told me of a letter smuggled out of Addis Ababa from his cousin, a student who had been imprisoned during the last years of the emperor's rule. His cousin wrote, "I never thought I'd have nostalgia for Haile Selassie. I do now. It is painful." Last week a Persian driver, taking me past Dupont Circle, noticed some Iranian supporters of the *mujahadeen* collecting signatures on petitions to the U.N. against Khomeini. "They are Bani-Sadr's people, the technicians of the transfer of power," he said. "They told us that after the Shah everything would be better. They helped install the Ayatollah. The truth is that everything is worse. Much better the Pahlavis then the mullahs." My driver seemed to feel for these *mujahadeen* what the Cadets must have felt for the Mensheviks they met in Bolshevik prisons. These refugees may still long for home, but they suspect they will never see it again. And so they will enhance America.

A NEW BOOK REASSURES me somewhat about the Democratic Party, about which I have become increasingly hard to reassure. (There was never a chance that anyone could assure me about the Republicans. So I was just about to consider myself politically homeless.) The book, published by the University of Kentucky Press, is *The Life of the Party: Activists in Presidential Politics*, edited by Ronald Rapoport et al. Based on a survey of 1980 delegates to presidential nominating conventions in 11 states (the folk who choose the folk who do the nominating), it presents a different picture of the Democratic Party than the one I had come to hold. My view was that enough party activists were like the Chatto Street reformers Emerson characterized or the Labour Party conferees described by Orwell—basically, kooks—that the odds were always against a moderate candidate or platform. By moderate I mean sensible. Rapoport and his colleagues show otherwise. Of course their research sample excludes California, New York, and Massachusetts, which may fit my stereotypes a bit better. It's much too early to guess who 1988 will produce as the nominee. On the sheer plausibility scale no one so far—Hart, Gephardt, Dukakis—has any advantage over anyone else. Of course, all of the possible candidates have not yet formally announced, and there are actually one or two who have announced their intention to announce—which makes them "pre-announced"—who might just galvanize the demos by the freshness of their take, not so much on the particular issues as on the general direction of the political culture. In the meantime, though, many Democrats are tempted to think they can run and win on simple outrage. Intellectually impoverished, the Democrats rely on outrage the way the body relies on reflexes. Almost every day reveals a shabbier episode in the Reagan administration's by now very shabby record. In such circumstances, outrage is virtually self-fomentable. And it doesn't strain the party's coalition of divergent interests. Easier to run against Reagan than have to face the profligate laziness of Democrats on domestic policy and their chintzy laziness on foreign and national security affairs. If the Democrats choose this path of least resistance they may find that many of their own will be content with Robert Dole. Dole isn't much to write home about, but he also has distanced himself from Ronald Reagan with a rancorous wit that these days is often mistakenly taken for wisdom.

OVER THE PAST generation whole categories of Democratic voters have either switched their loyalty to the Republicans or have become militantly independent—the political equivalent of situational ethics. Increasingly, the party's only unassailable electoral base is made up of two components: the suppliers of public welfare and its beneficiaries—demanding groups not inconsiderable in number. This *does* put the party at the top of the compassion index, which insures the support of the opinion and academic elites, these two elites being overprivileged in slightly different ways but feeling a bit guilty about it all. Without their support—and it's not their numbers that count—no national election since 1972 would have been even a race. But this is not an adequate formula for building a party or for governing a country.

M. P.

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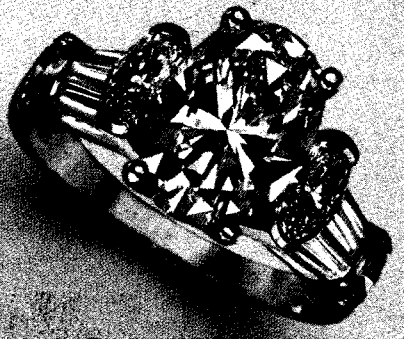
Your jeweler is the expert where diamonds are concerned. His knowledge can help make the acquisition of a quality diamond of a carat or more the beautiful, rewarding experience it should be.

A diamond is forever.



The ring shown features a quality diamond of 2 carats.

A CARAT OR MORE. EXTRAORDINARY DIAMONDS FOR EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN.

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